

INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATICS IN RUSSIAN: THE SPEECH
ACT OF REQUEST IN EMAIL

by

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ABSTRACT

As face-threatening speech acts, requests are of particular interest to second language acquisition scholars. They affect the interlocutors' public self-images, and thus require a careful consideration of the social distance between the interlocutors, their status, and the level of the imposition, factors that are weighed differently in different cultures. Studies have revealed that while use of direct and conventionally indirect strategies to perform requests seems to be a universal property of language, languages differ with respect to the choice of linguistic means employed in these two types of strategies. Even though nonnative speakers' perceptions of politeness in requests correlate with those of native, differences in performance exist. Findings from former studies suggest that second language learners' sociolinguistic competence is not native like. To date, however, most studies on performance of requests have focused on English as a second or foreign language. The present study broadens current research by examining requests written by native and nonnative speakers of Russian.

The second focus of this study is electronic communication. As a relatively new means of communication, the sociolinguistic dynamics of email is not adequately understood. However, its use for daily communication is increasing in all domains of life, including communication between university students and professors. Former research suggests that inappropriately formulated emails can affect how professors perceive students. As with requests in general, however, most studies to date on email have been

conducted on English data. Using the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) as the elicitation method, the present study examined electronic messages written by native and nonnative speakers of Russian. The messages were rated by three native speakers on three scales: clarity, social appropriateness, and politeness. One-way ANOVA revealed significant differences between the groups on all three scales. In addition, head acts, alerters, supportive moves, and internal modifications were analyzed using the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) coding manual. The strategy analysis revealed interesting similarities and differences between the groups. The study concluded that while Russian learners have approximated native sociolinguistic competence on some levels, significant gaps between native and nonnative formulation of electronic requests remain.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Chapter overview

The goal of this chapter is to present the theoretical background for the study. The chapter introduces pragmatics as a subfield of linguistics dealing with language use in a social context. It reviews the main contributions to the field of pragmatics by presenting the work of Austin (1962), Grice (1975), Searle (1969, 1975, and 1979), and Wilson and Sperber (1986, 1995, 1998, and 2002). Next, it provides an overview of the main directions in the theory of politeness including Brown and Levinson's model (1978, 1987), Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle, and Lakoff's (1973, 1977) rules of politeness. In the following section, cross-cultural issues in politeness are discussed, focusing specifically on Russian and North American cultural values. The chapter then introduces the field of interlanguage pragmatics which is interested in nonnative speakers' communicative competence, and provides an overview of the main typologies of language competence including Canale and Swain's (1980) model and Bachman and Palmer's (1982) framework. Finally, the chapter discusses email as a means of communication, with a special focus on email conventions and netiquette.

Pragmatics

Competent language users have a firm grasp of the rules of syntax, morphology and phonology of that language, and know how to apply these rules in a given social context, at the discourse level. Pragmatics is the study of meaning in use. It focuses on how meaning is constructed and interpreted in a given context, and on how speakers often express more than, or something different than, what they actually say. In Green's words (1996), pragmatics views communication as 'the successful interpretation by an addressee of a speaker's intent in performing a linguistic act' (p. 1). Similarly, both Austin (1962) and Searle (1969, 1975) argue that the goal of pragmatics is to analyze how speakers use language to perform linguistic acts, e.g., requests, apologies, orders, advice, etc.

The linguistic act, commonly referred to as the speech act, is the basic unit of analysis in pragmatics. Following Austin's Speech Act Theory (1962), it is conventional in pragmatics to use a three-fold distinction between different levels of speech act meaning:

Locution – the literal meaning

Illocution – the meaning intended by the speaker

Perlocution – the effect the speech act has on the recipient

For example, the utterance: *The dog is whining* (locution) can imply that the speaker wants the recipient to take the dog out (illocution), and as a result the recipient may indeed take the dog for a walk (perlocution). This distinction is an important one because more often than not, utterances are not interpreted literally (e.g., the above utterance could be interpreted as a simple statement of a fact, or as a request to take the dog for a

walk), and because a misinterpretation at the illocutionary level can lead to a perlocution unintended by the speaker (in this case, the listener could lock the dog in his kennel and, as a result, the dog could urinate on his bed). Thomas (1995) points out that the intended illocutionary force is typically interpreted correctly by competent adult language users. However, a lack of communicative competence (defined below) on the part of the speaker, and/or a misinterpretation on the part of the recipient can, as will be shown later in this chapter, often lead to miscommunication at both the locutionary and illocutionary level in a second language (L2).

Conversational implicature

While Austin's distinction between locution, illocution, and perlocution allows us to differentiate between the utterance meaning and the speaker's intended meaning, Grice uses the terms 'what is said' and 'what is meant.' He also introduces the term *conversational implicature* to refer to the inference made by the recipient when attempting to understand the implied meaning (Grice, 1975). Thomas (1995) clarifies that implicature is generated by the speaker while the listener produces an inference (i.e., deduction based on the evidence in the speaker's utterance) (p. 58). By generating an inference, the recipient gets from the locution (what is said) to the illocution (what is meant).

Grice's cooperative principle and the four maxims

The Cooperative Principle and four conversational maxims allow the listener to interpret conversational implicature (Grice, 1975). The Cooperative Principle states:

‘make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction to the talk exchange in which you are engaged’ (p. 78). This means both the speaker and the listener are constantly interpreting each other’s goals in a conversation. The four maxims (p. 80) are as follows:

Quantity: Make your contribution as informative as required (for the current purpose of the exchange).

Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Quality: Do not say what you believe to be false.

Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation: Be relevant.

Manner: Avoid obscurity of expression.

Avoid ambiguity.

Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

Be orderly.

It is not always possible to observe all four maxims at the same time, as they may be in conflict. For example, in a situation when the speaker is not sure how much background information the hearer already has, the maxim of Manner may have to be sacrificed by saying more than was necessary. Grice distinguished five different ways in which speakers can fail to observe a maxim: flouting a maxim, violating a maxim, infringing a maxim, opting out of a maxim, and suspending a maxim. To flout a maxim means to blatantly fail to observe it in order to generate an implicature. That is, when a maxim is flouted, the hearer is expected to look for a meaning which is different from the expressed meaning. Sometimes speakers flout one of the maxims explicitly, for example

by saying ‘I know this is irrelevant, but...’ (Relation) or ‘This may not be true, but...’ (Quality). More often, however, maxims are flouted without the use of metadiscourse that points it out.

In the following scenario, the maxim of Quality is flouted because the speaker got annoyed with the interlocutor’s question and wants to signal to him that the topic is unwelcome:

Example 1

B just told A that his major is linguistics.

A: That’s really interesting. What languages do you speak?

B: Well... let’s see... English, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, Romanian, Turkish, Cuitlatec, Tumak and Shawia Berber.

Obviously (to a linguist), B says something that he believes to be false. He does so because A asked a question typical of nonlinguists who often assume that all linguists do is learn to speak foreign languages, and because he wants to prevent further questions about his major. The purpose is not to lie, but to generate an implicature. By saying something that is clearly improbable or untrue, the speaker hints that it is time to switch to a different topic. Thus, the maxim of Quality is flouted when speakers do not have sufficient evidence for what they say or what they say is blatantly untrue. Another example of flouting the maxim of Quality is when at the end of a very unsuccessful presentation audience members make sarcastic comments such as ‘That presenter was very knowledgeable, wasn’t she?’ By doing so, they violate the maxim of Quality.

To flout the maxim of Quantity is to blatantly provide more or less information than is required in a given situation, as the example below illustrates:

Example 2

A: What are you doing?

B: Nothing.

Here B gives less information than A wants and generates some ‘extra meaning,’ which in this case would be B’s desire to be left alone. Similarly, when the speaker provides more information than required, the maxim of Quantity is flouted.

The maxim of Relation is flouted when the speaker’s response is irrelevant to the conversation, for instance when the topic of the conversation is abruptly changed or when the interlocutor’s question is flagrantly ignored. An example of flouting the maxim of Relation is when, in the middle of a fierce verbal fight, one of the interlocutors suddenly observes: ‘What a gorgeous day it is today! D’you think I should call Amy and invite her for a walk?’ By flouting the maxim of Relation, the speaker generates an implicature that he is done with the fight now, perhaps even that he intends to ignore the hearer from now on.

Finally, speakers flout the maxim of Manner if the idea is not expressed in the clearest, briefest, and most orderly manner possible. For example, ambiguous statements, which are often utilized in advertising, violate the maxim of Manner, as exemplified below (Chen, 1992, p. 5):

Example 3

The Discover card: ‘It pays to Discover’

Natural gas: ‘Air pollution is a problem hanging over all of us.’

While to flout a maxim is to flagrantly nonobserve it, to violate a maxim, on the other hand, means to do so deliberately (i.e., in order to deceive or mislead the

interlocutor). For example, people often withhold information, thus violating the maxim of Quantity, as in the following situation:

Example 4

B knows that A's mom was just diagnosed with cancer but doesn't want to break the news to her.

A: So what did the doctors say?

B: They are still running tests.

A maxim can also be violated for the reason of politeness, for example when people tell the host that dinner was delicious whereas, in fact, they did not enjoy it. They choose to violate one of the maxims rather than to offend another person.

In addition to flouting a maxim and violating a maxim, Grice draws a distinction between opting out of a maxim and infringing a maxim. Opting out of a maxim takes place when the speaker does not show willingness to cooperate in the way required by a maxim, for example because of legal or ethical reasons. Infringing a maxim happens when the speaker fails to observe a maxim not to generate an implicature or to deceive, but because of the lack of linguistic means.

Appropriately observing, flouting or opting out of maxims is a sophisticated part of sociolinguistic competence, and it can be a challenge even for native speakers. This is because in order to correctly create and interpret implicatures speakers have to be familiar with the sociolinguistic rules of the language they are using and have sufficient background / contextual knowledge. These tasks are even more challenging for nonnative speakers whose sociolinguistic competence has not attained native-like proficiency. Thus, second language learners often infringe a maxim, which can lead to miscommunication.

Another possible interpretation is that nonnative speakers of a language, because of their lack of sociolinguistic competence, fail to correctly flout a maxim and generate an implicature. Infringing of some maxims, for example of the maxim of Quantity, can also stem from cultural differences, as when Russian speakers of English respond with a long story of their day when asked, 'How are you?' because in Russian culture responding in such a way is culturally appropriate. Whereas some linguists (see for example Keenan 1976, Thomas 1995) would classify such instances as suspending a maxim, that is, a situation when interlocutors do not expect a maxim to be fulfilled, another possible explanation would be to say that although the maxims may be universal, their interpretations differ cross culturally. In other words, whereas in some cultures the maxim of Quantity in the above example is satisfied by responding 'I'm fine. How about yourself?' in other cultures such a response would amount to nonobservance of the maxim as a more elaborate response is expected.

Critique of Grice's theory

While on the surface Grice's system of maxims and different ways of maxim non-observance seems quite straightforward, critics have identified several problems with it. It is not the purpose of this dissertation to critique and revise Grice's theory, but a few brief points will be noted, nonetheless.

The first issue is that it is not always clear whether the nonobservance of a maxim is intentional or unintentional, thus making it difficult to distinguish between flouting and violation of a maxim (Thomas, 1995, p. 88). Grice's theory does not provide an explanation of how the hearer can decide whether the nonobservance is a flout, a

violation, an infringement, or opting out of a maxim. The second problem is that a given utterance can often produce more than one possible implicature. Grice's theory, however, does not provide an explanation of how hearers determine which implicature is the correct one considering the circumstances in which the utterance was produced.

Language users encounter ambiguous utterances like the one in Example 5, below, quite frequently (adapted from Thomas, 1995, p. 89):

Example 5

A to her husband:

A: The cleaning lady is coming tomorrow. You have some 20-dollar bills lying around your desk.

It is not clear from A's utterance if she is implying that the cleaning lady is not to be trusted, if she is asking her husband to give her the money to pay the cleaning lady, or if she is simply saying that all surfaces should be cleaned of clutter so that the cleaning lady can easily dust them. Similar problems can arise when one of the interlocutors comes from an Eastern European culture that differs significantly from Western cultures when it comes to hospitality expectations and table manners. Many Americans who have spent time living in Russia may have experienced a problem similar to the one described below:

Example 6

A is an American who was invited to B's house for dinner. B is Russian. A just finished the second portion of cake that was placed on his plate by the host.

A: This cake was delicious. Thank you.

B reaches out for A's plate to serve yet another slice of the cake to him.

In this case, A's utterance could have generated two implicatures: (1) 'Thank you. I am full now.' or (2) 'Thank you. Could I have another piece?' Because of the host's Russian background, she chose the second interpretation, but Grice's theory does not predict how this choice of interpretation is made.

Overlap of maxims is yet another problem with Grice's theory that Thomas points out (p. 91). In particular, she argues that it is often difficult to distinguish between the maxim of Quantity and the maxim of Manner, as well as between the maxim of Quantity and the maxim of Relevance. To support the first claim, Thomas provides the following example (p. 92):

Example 7

A: What did you have to eat?

B: Something masquerading as chicken chasseur.

This situation can be interpreted in two ways: either B is providing more information than required ('chicken chasseur' would suffice) thus violating the maxim of Quantity, or B's response is obscure and violates the maxim of Manner. In regards to the latter, Thomas notes it is almost impossible to find instances where the maxim of Relevance is not in operation. She asserts, 'unless you assume that a contribution is in some way relevant to what has gone before, you will not begin to look for an implicature' (p. 92). Clearly, Grice's theory is quite informal (Thomas, p. 93), and it provides a set of procedures for calculating the conversational implicature in only some simple cases.

Relevance theory

The most serious challenge to Grice's inferential theory has been advanced by Wilson and Sperber. In 'Truthfulness and Relevance' (2002), as well as in earlier publications (1986, 1995, and 1998), they propose an alternative theory of communication. Instead of assuming that language interaction is governed by the cooperative principle, to which they term 'the maxim of truthfulness,' they suggest that it is better accounted for in terms of a principle of relevance. They criticize Grice's model, in which the hearer infers the meaning of an utterance through simply 'assigning referents to referring expressions, and perhaps [calculating] implicatures' (p. 600), as not accurately reflecting the complexity of human communication. Relevance Theory, on the other hand, is supposed to account for situations in which the discrepancy between the literal meaning and the inferred meaning is much greater.

Wilson and Sperber (2002) define 'relevance' as 'a property of inputs to cognitive processes which makes them worth processing' (p. 600). In human to human language communication, this translates into 'improvements in knowledge.' They argue that telling the truth is not a necessary condition for communication; on the contrary, the intended meaning can be derived from the literal meaning, whether it be literal, loose, or figurative, because the speaker constructs 'an interpretation which satisfies the hearer's expectations of relevance' (2002, p. 599). The theory is based on two general claims:

Cognitive Principle of Relevance: human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance.

Communicative Principle of Relevance: every act of overt communication conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance.

The first claim predicts that humans focus on the most relevant stimuli at a time and derive interpretations from them. The second claim ensures that the hearer can assume the utterance is relevant through the speaker's sheer willingness to participate in the interaction. In addition to these two rules, the relevance theory also assumes that utterances are relevant enough to be worth processing and the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences (presumption of optimal relevance); and that the interpretation of an utterance should require minimal effort and it should stop when the hearer's expectations of relevance are satisfied (relevance-guided comprehension heuristic).

The main advantage of Relevance Theory as compared to Grice's model is that it is based on one simple assumption that hearers make sense of an utterance by selecting those features of the context that are relevant, rather than plowing through a complex system of maxims. They assume that utterances are connected in a meaningful way and they utilize their background knowledge of the world in making inferences. Similarly, the speaker has to simply focus on selecting the information that should be relatively easy for the hearer to understand. An utterance is understood if its relevance is proven, i.e., if its meaning is accessible to the hearer. Very often, this means filling in the unspoken words, which Sperber and Wilson refer to as 'explicature,' and which they render a necessary step before implicature (2002, p. 261).

To illustrate how Relevance Theory copes with interactions that Grice's maxims could not explain, let us consider again example 6 above, provided here again as example 8:

Example 8:

A is an American who was invited to B's house for dinner. B is Russian. A just finished the second portion of cake that was placed on his plate by the host.

A: This cake was delicious. Thank you.

B reaches out for A's plate to serve yet another slice of the cake to him.

Relevance Theory allows the following interpretation. Because A is an American, when saying 'Thank you,' she intends for B to infer 'Thank you, I have had enough.' However, because B is Russian, the information that he fills in is 'Thank you, and I would love some more.' In other words, Relevance Theory, by highlighting the importance of the context and of the speaker's and hearer's background knowledge, eliminates the ambiguity resulting from literal interpretations of utterances and allows the participants to infer the implied meaning.

To consider another example, let us look at the conversation below:

Example 9

A, B and their dog are in front of their house weeding the yard. The front yard is not fenced. They see a cat across the street.

A: Here comes lunch.

B leashes the dog that starts barking ferociously.

B: Oh, how he loves cats!

Grice's theory would account for this situation by explaining that A flouted the maxim of relation by saying something that is very irrelevant to what they were doing (they were weeding their front yard and unless they were the relatives of Alf, we would not expect them to enjoy a serving of cat for lunch). Next, B flouted the maxim of quality

by saying something that is contrary to truth (why would she leash the dog if she did not think he was going to chase the cat?). This example clearly shows how inefficient Grice's theory is – it takes several steps for the interlocutors to make sense of this conversation. The Relevance Theory, on the other hand, provides a much more effortless way to interpret A's and B's utterances. All they have to do is recall their background knowledge about the dog (he hates cats; in fact, he chases them whenever he gets a chance), and assume that anything that is mentioned is relevant to the context of the conversation.

Thus, while in Grice's theory, the speaker and the hearer are involved in a complex evaluation of which maxims were observed, flouted, or infringed, the Relevance Theory simplifies this process by allowing the interlocutors to assume that everything that is said is related, thus limiting the number of different inferences that can be made.

Searle: direct and indirect speech acts

An overview of early work in pragmatics would not be complete without mentioning the contributions made by Searle (1969, 1975). While Austin proposes the distinction between locution, illocution, and perlocution, and Grice makes a distinction between 'what is said' and 'what is meant,' Searle uses the terms 'propositional content' (the literal meaning of an utterance) and 'illocutionary force' (what the speaker intends by what is said).

In his 'Indirect Speech Acts' (1975), Searle differentiates between direct and indirect speech acts. Direct speech acts are those in which the propositional content (i.e., 'what is said') carries one illocutionary force (i.e., 'what is meant'). For example, if the speaker says to the hearer 'Please walk the dog' and by that means that the hearer should

put on a pair of shoes and weather-appropriate apparel, put a leash on the dog, exit the house, and proceed down the street, the speaker is performing a direct request. If, however, the speaker utters the statement, 'The dog is whining,' and by that implies that the hearer should put on a pair of shoes and weather-appropriate apparel, put a leash on the dog, exit the house, and proceed down the street, the speaker is performing an indirect request. Searle (1979) defines an indirect speech act as an act performed 'by means of another' (p. 60), and states that in indirect speech acts the speaker communicates more than is actually said. Thus, in direct speech acts, there is a connection between the literal meaning and the conventional meaning, or between the form and the function of the utterance. In indirect speech acts, the literal meaning and the conventional meaning are different.

Whereas indirect speech acts are a normal occurrence in everyday language use, Searle is concerned with explaining how it is possible for the speaker to generate them and for the hearer to interpret them. He proposes that this can be accomplished because both the speaker and the hearer share the same linguistic and nonlinguistic background information which allows them to create an implicature and make correct inferences, respectively. In particular, he suggests that mutual understanding is possible due to the cooperative principles of conversation (Grice, 1975), the factual background information and accepted conventions that interlocutors share, and the power of inference (Searle, 1975: 61).

The illocutionary force of some indirect speech acts can be interpreted based on their conventional use. Searle (1975, 1979) provides a long list of examples of structures conventionally used to perform indirect requests in English. He divides them into the

following groups: sentences concerning the hearer's ability to perform an act (e.g., 'Can you walk the dog?'); sentences concerning the speaker's wish or want that the hearer will do an act (e.g., 'I would like you to walk the dog'); sentences concerning the hearer doing an act (e.g., 'Will you walk the dog?'); sentences concerning the hearer's desire or willingness to do an act (e.g., 'Would you mind walking the dog?'); sentences concerning reasons for doing an act (e.g., 'You should walk the dog'); and sentences embedding one of the above elements inside another or embedding an explicit directive illocutionary verb inside one of the above (e.g., 'Would it be too much if I suggested that you could possibly walk the dog?') (pp. 65-67). While Searle's categories of indirect requests are not going to be used in the study proposed here, they are interesting in that they show a wide the range of structures used to perform conventionally indirect requests.

Speech acts and politeness

Brown and Levinson's model

One of the reasons why there are so many different ways to perform indirect speech acts is politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Lakoff, 1973, 1977). The notion of politeness is inseparable from the daily use of language. In other words, as people participate in linguistic interactions, they use politeness strategies to accomplish their goals. According to Thomas (1995), politeness is context-dependent, i.e., it consists of a linguistic form, the context in which the utterance occurs, as well as the relationship between the interlocutors (p. 157).

One of the most influential models of politeness was developed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). This model is based on the notion of face proposed by Goffman

(1967). Face refers to one's public self-image and how this self-image is maintained in interactions with others. According to Brown and Levinson, when people interact with each other, they have to show an awareness of the face. Brown and Levinson distinguish between 'positive face,' i.e., a person's wish to be a part of a group and sharing involvement with others, which is manifested in expressing friendliness or approval. 'Negative face,' on the other hand, involves detachment and a need for personal freedom, and is accomplished by giving options, apologizing, and recognizing the status of the interlocutor. When humans use language, they typically aim at establishing a good relationship as part of an interaction, which is accomplished by juggling positive face and negative face. In other words, people show respect for each-other's expectations regarding self-image, they take each-other's feelings into consideration, and they avoid Face Threatening Acts (FTAs).

FTAs are those illocutionary acts which can damage or threaten a person's face (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987). Invitations, orders, requests, apologies and insults are some examples of Face Threatening Acts. FTAs can threaten both the speaker's face (e.g., an apology) and the listener's face (e.g., an offer). However, there are some strategies available to interlocutors that allow them to reduce the likelihood of damaging or threatening another person's face. An appropriate strategy can be chosen based on the assessment of the FTA. The first available strategy is to decide whether to perform the FTA or avoid it altogether (say nothing). If, however, the speaker chooses to perform the FTA, four more strategies can be used to minimize the effect of the FTA on the hearer:

1. Perform the FTA on-record without redressive action (bald-on-record)
2. Perform the FTA on-record using positive politeness

3. Perform the FTA on-record using negative politeness
4. Choose an off-record strategy

To perform an FTA boldly on record means to perform the act directly (cf. Searle's distinction between direct and indirect speech acts). Bold on record acts are performed without undertaking redressive action, i.e., without an attempt to save the face. Directness is not always equal to rudeness, however. For example, issuing the request in Example 10 below to a neighbor is highly face-threatening, whereas making the offer in Example 11 to a guest is not. This is because directness often indicates lack of social distance.

Example 10

To a neighbor:

A: I want you to walk my dog when I am on vacation next week.

Example 11

To a dinner guest:

A: Have some more cake.

Another strategy to minimize the threat to the face is performing the FTA on record using positive politeness. This is accomplished by appealing to the hearer's need to be liked and treated as a member of the same group. Examples of appeals to positive face include cases when the speaker demonstrates closeness and solidarity with the hearer, makes appeals to friendship, makes the hearer feel good or emphasizes common goals.

Brown and Levinson's model of strategies for performing FTAs is represented in Figure 1. They list fifteen different strategies to perform positive politeness: seeking agreement; avoiding disagreement; joking; offering or promising; being optimistic; intensifying interest to the hearer; using in-group identity markers; presupposing or asserting common ground; attending to the hearer's interests, wants, needs or goods; exaggerating interest, approval or sympathy with the hearer; including both the speaker and the hearer in the activity; giving reasons; and assuming or asserting reciprocity; and giving gifts to the hearer (pp. 101-129).

The third option to reduce the impact of the FTA is to use on record negative politeness. By doing so, the social distance between the speaker and the hearer is stressed, and the interlocutors avoid encroaching on each other's territory. Some negative politeness strategies include giving options, using apology for interference or

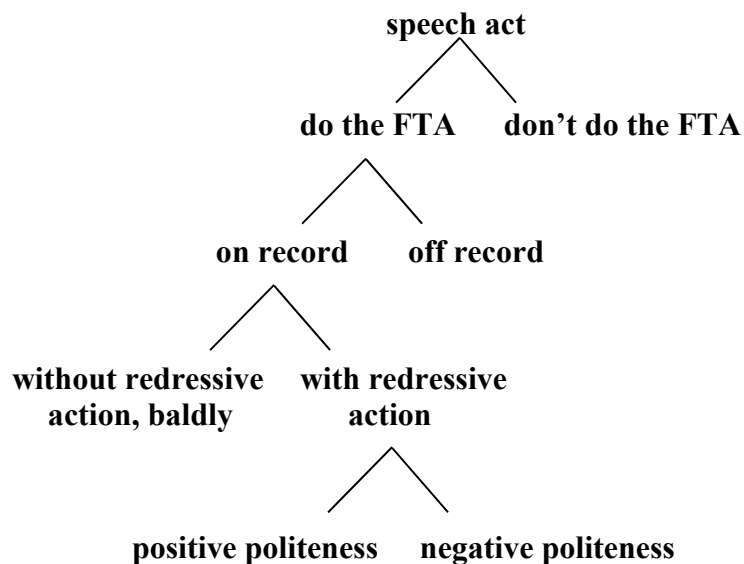


Figure 1: Brown and Levinson's (1987) strategies for performing FTAs.

transgression, stressing the importance of one's values (e.g., time), using conventional politeness markers such as hedges, or impersonalizing strategies such as passive voice (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 70).

Finally, it is also possible to go off record, or formulate the speech act in an indirect way. Brown and Levinson define an indirect speech act as an act that "is either more general (contains less information in the sense that it rules out fewer possible states of affairs) or actually different from what one means (intends to be understood)" (p. 211). In other words, off-record strategies require violation of one or more of Grice's cooperative maxims. In order to understand an indirect speech act as intended, the hearer has to make an inference (cf. Grice's conversational implicature). If the listener wants to perform an FTA off record, Brown and Levinson claim, the hearer needs to receive some hints and draw on contextual clues in order to correctly interpret the implicature (p. 213).

Brown and Levinson distinguish fifteen off-record strategies: giving hints; giving association clues; presupposing; understating; overstating; using tautologies; using contradictions; being ironic; using metaphors; using rhetorical questions; being ambiguous; being vague; over-generalizing; displacing the hearer; and being incomplete (using ellipsis). These strategies produce an illocutionary force that is likely to be correctly understood by the hearer.

In the framework developed by Brown and Levinson, the three social factors affecting the choice of appropriate linguistic strategies to save both the listener's and the hearer's face are the distance, the power relationship, and the ranking of imposition. These factors are used by the speaker in computing the seriousness of an FTA to be performed. Once this is done, the speaker can choose the most appropriate strategy to

perform the FTA. Brown and Levinson propose that the politeness of a message increases together with the level of threat posed by an FTA. They also claim that their theory is universal, i.e., that everyone has a positive and a negative face; differences between cultures are accounted for in terms of preferences for politeness strategies, thus gravitating either towards positive politeness (e.g., Western cultures) or negative politeness (e.g., Chinese culture).

Maxims of politeness: Leech and Lakoff

Leech (1983) and Lakoff (1973, 1977) propose models of politeness in terms of conversational maxims. Leech proposes a Politeness Principle and six conversational maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. While Grice's Cooperative Principle accounts for the relation between the sense and the illocutionary force of the utterance, Leech argues that the Politeness Principle with its six maxims is needed to account for the use of indirectness and for the relationship between the sense and illocutionary force of nondeclarative utterances. That is, in cases where the Cooperative Principle alone fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, the Politeness Principle can rescue it (1983, p. 80).

Leech's Politeness Principle states, 'Minimize (other things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs; Maximize (other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs' (p. 81). The tact maxim states that speakers should minimize the cost and maximize the benefit to others. That is, this maxim allows speakers to minimize the imposition on the hearer and also to allow options. The maxim of generosity says requires the speaker to minimize the expression of benefit and maximize the expression

of cost to self. Thomas (1995) suggests it should be rephrased as follows: “Minimize the expression of cost to other; maximize the expression of benefit to other” (p. 162).

Languages vary in the extent to which they apply Leech’s maxims.

The maxim of approbation requires the speaker to minimize dispraise and maximize praise of others as well as persons or things that they value. That is, whenever possible, the speaker should strive to praise others and to withhold criticism. This maxim helps interlocutors avoid disagreement and make each other feel good by showing solidarity. The maxim of modesty, on the other hand, requires that the speaker should maximize the expression of dispraise of self and minimize the expression of praise of self. It is because of this maxim that interlocutors may reject a complement or diminish the value of a favor they did for someone as in the example below:

Example 12

A: Thanks again for walking my dog. It was really nice of you.

B: No big deal.

The fifth maxim, the maxim of agreement, helps interlocutors avoid conflict. It requires them to minimize the expression of disagreement and maximize the expression of agreement. That is, this maxim predicts that interlocutors should be more direct in expressing agreement than in expressing disagreement. The maxim is apparent in the use of hedges when expressing a different point of view, as Example 13 shows.

Example 13

A: You know, I really don’t think your dog should sleep in your bed.

B: I can see your point, but...

Finally, the maxim of sympathy states that one should minimize antipathy and maximize sympathy between self and other; this maxim operates in situations when the speaker expresses regret, condolences, or congratulations. Thus, it explains why interlocutors avoid openly speaking about unpleasant topics and use euphemisms to soften the message. As with all other of Leech's maxims, the application of the maxim of sympathy is culture specific. Anybody who either grew up or has spent a considerable amount of time in a Slavic country such as Poland or Russia will (even if only for a brief moment) be taken aback at the sight of an (overly) excited American congratulating a friend on something as banal as passing a driving test or putting together a bookshelf. Similarly, to give another example, the application of the maxim of Modesty varies across cultures. Although in Western cultures compliments are supposed to be accepted, the response in Example 14 is appropriate in some (Slavic) cultures:

Example 14:

A: I love your dress!

B: Oh, it's so old.

According to Lakoff, the following three rules of politeness minimize interlocutors' "wasted effort or friction" or confrontation between them (1977, p. 88), and preserve their positive face and negative face: formality, hesitancy, and equality or camaraderie. The first rule states: 'don't impose,' (p. 88) thus ensuring that speakers behave in accordance with the etiquette required by the context and mark the social distance between each other using strategies such as passive or V rather than T pronouns (e.g., 'Sie' rather than 'du' in German, or 'вы' rather than 'ты' in Russian), and that they do not ask inappropriate questions. Lakoff's second rule of politeness requires that

interlocutors give each other options. This rule is apparent in the use of politeness strategies such as the use of questions or question intonation, the use of tags or 'please' in imperatives and instructions, use of particles such as 'well,' 'er,' 'ah' and the use of euphemisms (p. 90). The last rule, equality or camaraderie, requires that the speaker should make the hearer feel good in situations when the speaker is of superior or equal status with the hearer (p. 94). Strategies used to implement the rule of equality involve switching from using titles and last name to first name in the form of address; using informal expressions or switching to the hearer's dialect to show solidarity; and talking about more intimate topics.

In sum, both Brown and Levinson's face-saving view of politeness and Leech's and Lakoff's conversational-maxim approach expand Grice's account of language communication in that they view communication as a compromise between attaining maximum efficiency and maintaining positive relationships among interlocutors. Another important similarity is the claim that the level of indirectness is positively correlated with the level of politeness. The theories differ in that the face-saving account emphasizes constant attention to face through selection of appropriate linguistic means, while the conversational-maxim approach views politeness as conflict avoidance. Nevertheless, both approaches have important shortcomings that are discussed below.

Criticisms of the existing models of politeness

None of the models of politeness presented above is without problems. Leech's and Lakoff's models narrowly focus on the recipient of the message. Additionally, as far as Leech's approach is concerned, it seems that the number of possible maxims is

unlimited. In other words, upon encountering a formerly unexplained irregularity in communication, the theory could be expanded by adding a new maxim, which makes it inelegant.

The main line of criticism of Brown and Levinson's theory is that it is culturally very ethnocentric as it is based on western notions of politeness. That is, it assumes that face is a personal concept. However, it has been pointed out that in some cultures, e.g., Japanese, face appears to be an interpersonal notion based on group membership (Gu, 1990; Mao, 1992). Another criticism is that the notion of negative politeness is not applicable in collectivist cultures, such as Chinese, which value an individual's social status in a group rather than individual freedom (Gu, 1990; Mao, 1992). In other words, it seems that Brown and Levinson's notion of universal politeness is hard to support.

In addition, Brown and Levinson's formula for calculating the level of threat to face using the three variables: social distance, power, and the degree of imposition, suggests that human interaction is "an activity of continuous mutual monitoring of potential threats to the faces of the interactants, and of devising strategies for maintaining the interactants' faces – a view that if always true, could rob social interaction of all elements of pleasure" (Nwoye, 1992, p. 311). In fact, Nwoye proposes the notion of 'group face' to discuss politeness in cultures in which the collective image takes priority over self-image.

Another problem with this model of politeness is that it focuses on the speaker, and, moreover, assumes that speakers make rational choices when choosing an appropriate politeness strategy, as suggested by the binary system of strategy choices (Watts, 2003, p. 88).

One of the main critics of Brown and Levinson's theory, Watts (2003), summarizes the weaknesses of Brown and Levinson's theory and goes as far as to question the validity of distinction between positive and negative face. He points out that rather than being a theory of politeness, they propose a theory of face work. While the utterances themselves may not be inherently polite or impolite, when employed in a certain context they carry out face work and thus "may be interpreted as polite within the context of discourse activity" (p. 95). Thus, face work does not equal politeness.

Questioning the term 'polite,' Watts instead proposes that utterances can be 'politic,' or, in other words, appropriate in a given situation. More specifically, he argues that because linguistic forms are not intrinsically polite or impolite, linguistic behavior should be evaluated based on whether it comprises with the expected norms. That linguistic behavior that is perceived as appropriate in the light of the social expectations should be referred to as 'politic behavior' (2003, p. 19). Overall, Watts (2003) proposes a discursive approach to politeness whose goal is to 'recognize when a linguistic utterance might be open to interpretation by interactants as (im)polite' (p. 143). As such, his approach appears more comprehensive.

Politeness and the speech act of request

The speech act of request is one of the most widely studied speech acts (see Chapter 2 for literature review). Recall that Brown and Levinson categorize requests as FTAs, i.e., acts that threaten the face, and thus call for a redressive action. This is because performing a request involves high social stakes for both the speaker and the hearer (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989). The various risks associated with performing a

request stem from the fact that the speaker wants a resource that the hearer possesses (whether it is related to material gains, monetary gains, time or talent), and include both a possible refusal on the part of the hearer to grant the request and an infringement upon the hearer's freedom of action. At the same time, the range of linguistic means available for performance of requests is incredibly broad (recall Searle's [1975, 1979] list of strategies to perform conventionally indirect strategies in English as an example), and the selection of the appropriate strategy has to be based on a careful evaluation of the context of the locution and the involved stakeholders. Such a task is extremely complex as the interlocutors employ both the knowledge of grammatical structures and the relevant social and contextual features.

If performance of such an intricate speech act as a request is a complex task for native speakers, it must pose serious challenges to second language learners, too. First, they have to carefully consider what language forms are available to them. In earlier stages of second language acquisition these may be quite limited; yet later on, even with progressing development of proficiency, the applicable linguistic forms may not be fully acquired. Second, learners have to consider the context of the utterance, and the relationship between themselves and the interlocutor. They have to be able to assess their own social role, the interlocutor's social role, the social distance between them, and the situation in which the exchange occurs, to name just a few factors. As Kasper and Rose point out, whereas learners are conscious of the need to attend to politeness, "even when their interlanguage lexicon and grammar contain materials deployable for internal speech act modification, [they] often do not use this material for such pragmalinguistic functions [because] internal modification through grammaticalized material requires a highly

developed control of processing” (2002, p. 26) The fact that, as will be seen in the next section, the social factors affecting communication may be interpreted differently in different cultures, only adds to the complexity of performing a request in a second language.

Cross-cultural differences in politeness

That all languages and cultures possess linguistic and nonlinguistic means allowing them to adjust their communication to situational and social context is a widely accepted fact. Language speakers vary their style in accordance with the formality of the situation, the social status of the parties involved, and the purpose of the interaction. However, Brown and Levinson’s proposal that certain cultures tend to employ one type of politeness over another (1978, 1987) has been extensively questioned. Their claim that some cultures show preference for positive politeness strategies, whereas others prefer negative politeness strategies has been criticized as ethnocentric, i.e., created from the perspective of a Western English-speaking culture. As stated previously, one explicit critique can be found in work that suggests that Eastern cultures such as Chinese and Japanese stress the importance of the collective image, and their way of creating politeness may be better accounted for in terms of ‘group face’ (Nwoye, 1992).

In their discussion of the issue of universality in performance of speech acts, Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) suggest that the notion of politeness is “culturally relativized” (p. 24). For example, direct and indirect strategies may carry different politeness values in different cultures. Two of the goals of their Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) were to shed more light on realization of speech acts

(requests and apologies) across different languages and to investigate the similarities and differences of strategies used to performed speech acts be native and nonnative speakers. Although CCSARP will be discussed in more detail in Chapters Two and Three, it should be noted here that the findings from this project support the cultural relativity of request and apology strategies. Their results also suggest that members of a culture share mutual expectations about what linguistic behavior is appropriate in various situations and that conventional indirectness varies cross-culturally (p. 66).

House (2006) points out that the behavioral norms and expectations in a given community constitute politeness, i.e., the behaviors that go unnoticed because they are the default. On the other hand, both over-politeness and impoliteness are noticed because they are inappropriate. House suggests that the differences between cultural norms and expectations can cause clashes, misunderstandings, and mutual accusations of impoliteness between speakers of different languages precisely because they are perceived as either overly polite or impolite (p. 260). Using five dimensions of cross-cultural differences: directness/indirectness, orientation towards Self/orientation towards Other, orientation towards Content/orientation towards Addressees, Explicitness/Implicitness, and Ad-hoc formulation/Verbal routines in her comparison of German and English politeness strategies, House concluded that shared cultural conventions underpin speakers' linguistic choices, and that "linguistic differences in realizing discourse may be taken to reflect deeper differences in cultural preference and expectation patterns" (p. 264).

House's statement has important implications for the present study. If preferences for certain politeness strategies are rooted in cultural norms and expectations, and if

differences between cultures can cause misunderstanding and clashes in intercultural interactions, then understanding the roots of these cultural differences may be helpful in explaining differences in communication styles. Since the research proposed here is going to focus on electronic requests in American English and Russian, the following section considers some cultural factors that can contribute to the choice of politeness strategies in the respective languages.

American English vs. Russian

Any American who has either had interactions with native Russians, or has spent some time living in Russia will admit that Russian culture is very different from American culture, or that Russian and American cultures differ from each other. Issues that are frequently commented on range from the Russians' profound hospitality and intimate relations with friends to their fatalistic view of life and nature, pessimism, and tendency to complain which has even been termed 'the discursive art of suffering' (Ries, 1997, p. 83). Conversely, Russians commonly perceive Americans as strong-willed, independent, and optimistic on one hand, and fake, overly excitable, and unreliable on the other (Zatsepina & Rodriguez, 1999). These views result in the fact that each culture perceives the other through the proverbial glasses of its own values, norms, expectations, and prejudices.

The importance of culture in cross-cultural pragmatics cannot be understated. Learning a second or a foreign language is inseparable from learning the culture of the peoples who speak it as their native tongue, and learners' attitudes towards the target culture can even affect their levels of attainment (Schumann, 1978). While the present

study does not attempt a contrastive analysis of the American and the Russian culture, understanding the respective cultural values can shed some light on the linguistic choices made by the study participants.

A great deal has been written on the topic of cultural differences between Russians and Americans. Kartalova (1996) suggests that Americans value self-reliance, choice, informality, security, self-determination, self-control, individual responsibility, success, punctuality, friendliness, and respect of personal boundaries. Russians, on the other hand, may value involvement, hospitality, generosity, trust, concern, sincerity, directness, intimacy, loyalty, emotional commitment, spontaneity, flexibility, and inner freedom of feelings and thoughts pertaining to morality.

Kohls (1994) provides a detailed list and elaborate definitions of the core American values, his purpose being to facilitate the introduction of new immigrants to the American society. The first of the values on his list is personal control over the environment – the belief that people are able to control nature and that with persistence, anything can be accomplished. Seeing change as positive is the second value on the list. According to Kohls, unlike other cultures which perceive change as ‘a disruptive, destructive force’ (p. 2), Americans value change and link it to progress, development, and improvement. The next value on Kohls’ list is control of time: Americans follow schedules and are wary of interruptions that prevent them from finishing what they have planned. They stress the importance of using time wisely, and of attaining goals. It is because of these first three values that Americans cherish hard work, responsibility, and accomplishment.

Kohls claims egalitarianism to be one of the most important American values. By this he means that Americans believe everybody should have an equal opportunity to succeed, even if success is not measured in the same way for everyone. Individualism and privacy, on the other hand, explain why many Americans perceive their thoughts and acts as highly individualistic, as well as why they view time spent alone as a positive condition. Kohls defines privacy as ‘the ultimate result of individualism’ (p. 3).

The next value discussed by Kohls is what he refers to as self-help concept. The self-help concept means individuals can take credit only for their own accomplishments, but also that they take pride in the fruits of their labor. Related to it is the value of competition and free enterprise, because it motivates individuals to producing their very best. Kohls points out that this value may cause a cultural clash in individuals who come from cultures that value cooperation rather than competition (p. 4).

In addition to the self-help concept and the values of competition and free enterprise, Kohls mentions the value of future orientation and action/work orientation. The former one is expressed in the belief that hard work will bring improvements in the future and greater happiness. The latter leads Americans to plan very busy, full schedules, including recreation schedules. Kohls claims that this particular value can be blamed for creation of ‘workaholics’ but also notes that it also allows Americans to take pride in their work, even if it is physical, unskilled work that may not gain one respect in many other cultures (p. 5).

The next two values on the list are informality and directness, and openness and honesty. Kohls notes that because Americans tend to be very informal in comparison with other cultures, they may be perceived as disrespectful. Informality is expressed in both

the forms of address and linguistic choices as well as in behaviors and dress styles. In respect to the value of directness, openness and honesty, Kohls actually makes a reference to saving face. He comments that Americans tend to be more direct than people from other cultures, but the choice of direct strategies is not based in the desire to make the interlocutor lose face. Rather, they choose directness because they associate it with honesty and sincerity (p. 6).

The final two values discussed by Kohls are practicality and efficiency and materialism/acquisition. Due to the first one, Americans tend to be realistic, practical, and efficient. Practicality is, for them, one of the most important factors affecting important decisions. Kohls credits this value for American contributions to innovations and inventions, as well as for the fact that Americans shun from being sentimental or irrational(p. 7). The value of materialism/acquisition, on the other hand, explains why Americans value material objects and may view them as a reward for their hard work. They also typically value ownership, and often replace older possessions with new ones, even if the old ones are still functional (p. 9).

As far as Russian cultural values are concerned, Bashkirova (2001) suggests the following hierarchy of significance based on the data from the 1995-1999 World Values Survey: family, work, friends and acquaintances, free time, religion, and politics. Family is one of the most traditional values in Russia, and most Russians see it “as a necessary condition for happiness” (p. 7). Having a family implies being married, having offspring, and sharing a household and responsibilities. This goes hand in hand with having a reliable, well-paying job. Social involvement is third in the ranking: friends are an important aspect of Russians’ daily interactions, and refusing a friend a favor, no matter

how imposing, is an uncommon practice. With regards to the last three values in the hierarchy, Bashkirova reports a fair amount of disagreement among the respondents. Thus, it is doubtful that free time, religion and politics can be considered universal cultural values in Russia.

In her comparison of American and Russian cultures, Kartalova (1996) contrasts American independence with Russian involvement. She considers a different set of cultural values from that of Bashkirova, namely hospitality and choice, external and internal personal boundaries, friendliness and intimacy, and courtesy and respect. Americans and Russians differ in regards to all of these. First, whereas Americans value freedom and independence of choice, this value can cause a cultural clash when they encounter Russians expressing hospitality and concern towards guests by violating their freedom to choose how much and what they want to consume (as perceived by American guests). Secondly, conflicts may arise when it comes to personal space and privacy boundaries. This is because Americans do not find it appropriate to discuss with acquaintances issues related to money, dating, and religion, but Russians do. Whereas Americans are very particular about their personal possessions, Russians are more open to allow others to share theirs. For example, Russians are less particular than Americans about their private space (p. 79) and for Russians, lending and borrowing money is not as fraught as it is for Americans (p. 80). Moreover, the two cultures differ in terms of the degree of informality and friendliness. In comparison with open, involved, overbearing Russians, Americans appear reserved, closed, and superficial in their relationships with others. Finally, clashes may arise from different perspectives of courtesy and respect, especially when it comes to the views on appropriate male and female behaviors. For

example, Russian women may expect men to open a door for them or help them put on a coat, whereas such behavior may be perceived as a violation of personal independence by American women.

Bashkirova (1996) claims that the differences in cultural values described in the previous paragraph influence Russian and American views on successful oral communication. For example, she suggests that American ‘superficial’ greetings are rooted in the fact that for Americans, independence is more valuable than involvement. On the other hand Russians, who expect more intimacy, may view warm greetings as an invitation to a more involved relationship. Another example provided by Bashkirova concerns complaining which is viewed as inappropriate by Americans (see Kohls’ [1994] values of personal control over the environment, self-help concept, and future orientation), whereas for Russians it may imply concern and involvement with others. Americans are often taken aback by pessimistic Russians who seem to think the world is going to end tomorrow.

The discussion of cultural values as presented by Kohl, Kartalova, and Bashkirova is not meant to present a comprehensive overview of Russian vs. American culture, nor can their views be trusted as completely objective. Kohl clearly privileges certain American values to present a positive image to immigrants, and Kartalova and Bashkirova seem to focus on traditional ‘core’ values, neglecting others that may be perceived as negative by Russians (such as being rich, which is traditionally frowned upon, yet more recently taken as a token of success).

Overall, however, it seems that Russians and Americans live in very different cultural worlds. To what extent these values might impact linguistic choices when

formulating requests, never mind communicate, is beyond the scope of this study.

Nevertheless, some of the differences in cultural values presented here are brought up in the discussion because, as will be seen below, the study findings indicate that responses produced by American subjects are rated as less socially appropriate than the ones produced by Russians.

Interlanguage pragmatics

Communicative competence

The previous section has shown that cultural values can influence not only nonverbal but also verbal behavior. As such, they are an important component of the knowledge nonnative speakers must obtain to successfully communicate in their L2. Interlanguage pragmatics is “the branch of second language research which studies how nonnative speakers [...] understand and carry out linguistic action in a target language, and how they acquire [second language (L2)] pragmatic knowledge” (Kasper, 1992: 203). It has also been described as “the study of nonnative speakers’ use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language’ (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993: 3). It is defined more narrowly by Kasper and Dahl (1991) as “the performance and acquisition of speech acts by L2 learners” (p. 216). Interlanguage pragmatics is interested in illocutionary force and politeness of speech acts performed by nonnative speakers, in addition to the development of communicative competence.

The first studies in interlanguage pragmatics emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s following the publication of Hymes’s ‘On Communicative Competence’ (1972) and Canale and Swain’s ‘Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second

Language Teaching and Testing' (1980). Campbell and Wales (1970) and Hymes (1972) were among the first linguists who rejected Chomsky's (1965) definition of competence, which assumes an ideal speaker and hearer and focuses on grammatical correctness of decontextualized sentences. Chomsky defines the goals of linguistics in the following way:

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogenous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. (p. 3)

Thus, Chomsky proposes that linguistics should be preoccupied with providing an account of the language users' unconscious yet perfect knowledge of grammar structure. Chomsky considers performance, or how language is used in context, on the other hand, to be full of flaws, imperfections and deviations from grammar rules (p. 4). Because performance is the only observable evidence of competence, linguists have to rely on it to reconstruct the underlying rules of grammar. However, Chomsky's theory is primarily concerned with 'discovering a mental reality underlying actual behavior' (p. 4) and thus performance is of secondary importance.

While acknowledging that performance might be an imperfect rendition of some underlying system, Campbell and Wales (1970) and Hymes (1972) argued that Chomsky's theory is problematic because it defines competence in isolation from sociocultural factors (1972, p. 271). Hymes pointed out that even though Chomsky's concept of performance is used to account for language use in context, it is not central to the theory, and the theory consequently generates an image of a speaker as "an abstract, isolated individual, almost an unmotivated cognitive mechanism, not, except incidentally,

a person in a social world” (p. 272). Instead, Hymes proposed that a part of speakers’ knowledge of language, which he refers to as communicative competence (p. 281), is the knowledge of what is contextually appropriate. He noted that communication does not take place in homogenous communities and asserted, “social life has affected not merely outward performance, but inner competence itself” (p. 274). The significance of this definition of competence lies in the fact that in addition to including the knowledge of how to produce grammatically correct sentences, it allows the speaker to know ‘when to speak, when not, and [...] what to talk about with whom, when, where, and in what manner’ (1972, p. 277). In other words, competence is the knowledge of the rules of language use which include not only the knowledge of grammar in Chomsky’s sense, but also the ability to select language that is context appropriate. Competence is linked to the speaker’s attitudes, values, linguistic knowledge, and social experience (Hymes, 1972, p.288). The actual meaning of utterances is context-dependent, with the context broken down into the following components: setting, participants, ends, act sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms of interaction and interpretation and genre (1974, p. 62).

Several frameworks describing language competence have been proposed since (see, for example, Saville-Troike’s [1982] ethnographic view; Gumperz’s [1982] ethnographic perspective; and Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell’s [1995] second language acquisition model). For the purpose of this study, the following three frameworks are the most relevant: the widely accepted Swain and Canale’s (1980) and Canale’s (1983) model, Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell’s (1995) model (also discussed in Celce-Murcia and Olshtein [2000]), and Bachman and Palmer’s (2010) recently revised approach.

Swain and Canale (1980) understand communicative competence as the underlying knowledge required for communication, and “the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence, or knowledge of the rules of grammar, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the rules of language use,” and distinguish it from the communicative performance which they define as the ‘production and comprehension of utterances’ through the application of the competencies (p. 6). Swain and Canale distinguish three components of communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic.

Grammatical competence includes the knowledge of the lexicon and the rules of phonology, morphology, syntax and sentence-level semantics (p. 29). Grammatical competence allows language users to both decode and encode the literal meaning of utterances. Sociolinguistic competence is comprised of the knowledge of sociocultural rules, which allows speakers to produce utterances that are appropriate in a given context, and the knowledge of discourse rules, which Swain and Canale broadly define as cohesion and coherence and structuring utterances in terms of topic and comment (p. 30). Sociolinguistic competence helps language users consider factors such as the number and status of interlocutors, as well as the purpose and norms of communication in context and to choose form (verbal and nonverbal) and the meaning appropriate for a given situation. Finally, strategic competence is the ability to overcome any difficulties that arise in communication using both linguistic and nonlinguistic means to compensate for deficiencies in one’s interlanguage; for example, the ability to paraphrase or to address strangers when their social status is unknown (pp. 30-31).

Swain and Canale's grammatical competence is thus equivalent to Chomsky's competence, but the other two components, sociolinguistic and strategic, are not present in Chomsky's framework. It is important to stress that Swain and Canale distinguish between 'communicative competence' and 'communicative performance.'

Communicative competence, in their view, refers to both knowledge of language and the ability to use this knowledge when communicating. Communicative performance, on the other hand, is the realization of communicative competence under limiting psychological constraints such as tiredness, nervousness, and background distractions. What Swain and Canale stress is that in order to be competent language users, second language learners need to know what native speakers are likely to say in a given situation (p.16).

Canale (1983) maintained the distinction between communicative competence and performance, renaming the latter as 'actual communication.' In this framework, communicative competence is manifested in 'actual communication' as "the realization of such knowledge and skill under limiting psychological and environmental conditions such as memory and perceptual constraints, fatigue, nervousness, distractions, and interfering background noises" (p. 5).

In addition to restating the distinction between grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic competence, Canale (1983) adds discourse competence, which he defines as the knowledge "of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres" (p. 9). In other words, discourse competence is the speaker's ability to use cohesion and coherence to create unity in different types of oral and written texts. This entails using cohesion devices (conjunctions, pronouns, synonyms, key term repetitions, etc.) and maintaining

relationships among meanings within a text. Notably, Canale (1983) also further stressed the importance of sociolinguistic competence in language users' ability to interpret 'social meaning' of utterances, such as function and attitude, when these cannot be interpreted based solely on the literal meaning. Thus, using Grice's terminology, sociolinguistic competence plays an essential role in both generating and interpreting conversational implicature.

The second model of communicative competence to be discussed here is the one proposed by Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell (1995). Their model was also developed from an L2 perspective and includes five components: discourse competence, linguistic competence, actional competence, sociocultural competence and strategic competence.

Discourse competence is centrally located and interacts with linguistic competence, socio-cultural competence and actional competence as discourse is created. Discourse competence is responsible for 'the selection, sequencing and arrangement of words, structures, sentences and utterances to achieve a unified spoken or written text' (p. 13). It is supported by cohesion (e.g., anaphora, conjunctions), deixis (e.g., personal pronouns, temporal expressions such as 'now,' 'then'), coherence (e.g., theme-rheme organization, sequence of tenses), genre/generic structure (e.g., narrative, lab report, interview), and conversational structure (e.g., performance of closings and openings, conversational collaboration, adjacency pairs).

The second element, linguistic competence, involves the knowledge of syntax (including constituent structure, word order, special constructions, coordination, and subordination), morphology (parts of speech, inflections, and derivational processes),

phonology (segmentals and suprasegmentals), orthography (letters or other writing symbols, phoneme-grapheme correspondences, spelling rules, punctuation and mechanics conventions), and the lexicon including formulaic constructions (words, fixed phrases, formulaic chunks, collocations, and idioms).

The next component, actional competence, allows language users to express and comprehend communicative intent, i.e., the illocutionary force of speech acts, including indirect speech acts. It also includes the knowledge of conventionalized forms, sentence stems, formulaic expressions and language strategies. Actional knowledge is comprised of two major components: knowledge of language functions and knowledge of speech act sets. The first component is broken down into interpersonal exchange (e.g., making and breaking engagements, complimenting), information (e.g., reporting and remembering), opinions (e.g., agreeing and disagreeing), feelings (e.g., expressing happiness or annoyance), suasion (e.g., giving orders, asking for permission), problems (e.g., complaining, regretting), and future scenarios (e.g., promising, predicting).

Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell hold that actional competence is distinct from sociolinguistic competence, which they define as “the speaker’s knowledge of how to express messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication, in accordance with the pragmatic factors related to variation in language use” (p. 23). The components of sociocultural competence are as follows: social contextual factors (i.e., participant and situational variables such as age, gender, time and place), stylistic appropriateness factors (politeness strategies, level of formality, registers), cultural factors (e.g., background knowledge about the target community, awareness of regional dialect differences), and nonverbal communicative factors (e.g.,

body language, use of space, silence). Celce-Murcia, Doenyei and Thurrell stress that language “is not simply a communication coding system but also an integral part of the individual’s identity and the most important channel of social organization” (p. 23). Sociocultural knowledge enables speakers to use language appropriately considering the social and cultural context in which communication takes place.

Finally, strategic competence in the Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell model is conceptualized as “knowledge of communication strategies and how to use them” (p. 26). More specifically, strategic competence in this model consists of avoidance or reduction strategies (e.g., avoiding of certain topics), achievement or compensatory strategies (i.e., manipulation of language to attain a communicative goal), stalling or time gaining strategies such as the use of fillers and repetitions, self-monitoring strategies (e.g., rephrasing), and interactional strategies (e.g., appeals for help, comprehension checks).

Finally, Bachman and Palmer (2010) propose a modified framework of what it entails to know a language from a second language acquisition perspective. This framework builds upon the former versions they proposed (Bachman & Palmer [1982]; Bachman [1990]; Bachman & Palmer [1996]), and it situates the ability to perform speech acts as one of the subcomponents of language use. They define language use as ‘the creation or interpretation of intended meanings in discourse by an individual’ (non-reciprocal language use) and as “the dynamic and interactive negotiation of intended meanings between two or more individuals in a particular situation” (reciprocal language use) (p. 34). Language knowledge and strategic knowledge are two subcomponents of language use which also engages personal attributes, topical knowledge, affective schemata and cognitive strategies (p. 36).

In Bachman and Palmer's model, language knowledge is further subdivided into organizational knowledge which includes grammatical knowledge and textual knowledge, and pragmatic knowledge composed of functional knowledge and sociolinguistic knowledge. Grammatical knowledge is comprised of the knowledge vocabulary and the rules of syntax, phonology and graphology. The next component, pragmatic knowledge, is the speaker's ability to formulate and comprehend messages. It includes functional knowledge and sociolinguistic knowledge. Sociolinguistic competence, which allows language users to relate their utterances to the language use settings, includes the ability to use and understand different registers, non-literal language, and cultural allusions (p. 45).

Language users need a competence that allows them to produce and interpret language in a given context. Several models of such a competence have been proposed. While Swain and Canale's (1980) is probably the most commonly referred to, Bachman and Palmer (2010) propose the broadest perspective as they situate the ability to utter socially appropriate discourse within language use. The findings contribute to our understanding of one of the components of language use, namely sociolinguistic knowledge.

Sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic failure

Lack of contextual appropriateness can lead to communicative problems more severe than errors in grammar would cause: sociopragmatic failure and pragmalinguistic failure. Leech (1983) differentiates between two areas of study in pragmatics: sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics. He defines sociopragmatics as the study of the

ways in which pragmatic performance varies depending on the social context, whereas pragmalinguistics is preoccupied with how language forms are used in the performance of particular speech acts. These concepts have been applied in the field of interlanguage pragmatics. In 'Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failure' (1983), Thomas makes a distinction between two ways second language learners fail to produce appropriate illocutionary acts : sociopragmatic (roughly equivalent to what Canale (1983) refers to as 'appropriateness of meaning') and pragmalinguistic failure (similar to Canale's 'appropriateness of form'). By sociopragmatic failure, Thomas understands a failure to perform the speech act required in a given situation (e.g., a failure to apologize for what one did). She claims that sociopragmatic failure results from different beliefs about rights and obligations of the interlocutors. Pragmalinguistic failure, on the other hand, takes place when the speaker performs the required act but uses inadequate linguistic means. It results from mistaken beliefs about the pragmatic force of an utterance. An example of pragmalinguistic failure is when a Polish or a Russian speaker of English accepts a compliment by downgrading him- or herself, rather than by accepting the compliment.

Lack of sociolinguistic competence can lead to pragmalinguistic failure, which in turn can cause miscommunication and even affect native speaker perceptions of nonnative speakers. One of the goals of the present study is to determine whether linguistic choices made by nonnative speakers of Russian affect the perceived levels of politeness and appropriateness of the electronic requests they write. Whereas Chapter 3 explicates the study design and procedures, the reader should keep in mind that the concept of pragmalinguistic failure may help account for some potential differences between native and nonnative means of constructing requests.

Pragmatic transfer

It has been proposed that pragmatic knowledge from the first language exerts an influence on the use and acquisition of pragmatic knowledge in the second language (Beebe et al., 1990; Kasper, 1992; Odlin, 1989; Wolfson, 1989). This phenomenon, referred to as pragmatic transfer, affects language use at both the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic level. In other words, a learner's pragmatic knowledge of the L1 affects the choice whether or not to perform a speech act, and what linguistic means are selected to carry it out. In parallel to L2 transfer in other areas, positive pragmatic transfer (when pragmatic conventions are shared by the languages) and negative pragmatic transfer (when pragmatic conventions differ between the languages) are distinguished. Because negative pragmatic transfer leads to nonnative like linguistic behavior, "in the real world, pragmatic transfer matters more, or at least more obviously, than transfer of relative clause structure than word order" (Kasper, 1992, p. 205).

Email

Because the proposed study will examine the use of politeness strategies by native and nonnative speakers in electronic requests, this section focuses on electronic communication via email. It describes email conventions and provides a brief overview of netiquette, or the rules of polite behavior on line.

Communication via email on American campuses has been increasing in recent years. Although it has not yet surpassed the use of face-to-face communication (office hours), it is already used more frequently than phone for student to faculty and faculty to student communication (Sheer & Fung, 2007). This poses a particular challenge for

nonnative speakers of English who may lack adequate linguistic and pragmatic skills and might be unfamiliar with the rules of netiquette in English. It can be expected that a similar phenomenon is taking place world-wide, and that learners of other languages very likely experience similar challenges.

Email conventions

As a relatively new channel of communication, email does not have well-specified linguistic conventions. Rather, as a medium that appears to draw on both spoken and written communication, it is not precisely situated on the formal/informal continuum. Research on computer-mediated language (CMD) shows that language used on-line is “less correct, complex and coherent than standard written language” (Herring, 2001). It often contains non-standard features, abbreviations, typos and mixed case, and as such, it presents particular competency challenges for its users. However, there have been some attempts to provide rules of netiquette, or internet etiquette, in both printed sources and on internet web sites.

Netiquette

Whereas recommendations on polite online behavior exist, the fact is that not all email users observe these guidelines. Rather, it seems that email is a medium of communication that is situated somewhere along the continuum between spoken and written communication. Academic studies of computer-mediated communication suggest that email is a new variety of discourse which combines features of spoken and written language (Georgakopoulou, 2000, p. 94). On the one hand, email is characterized by an

informal style, limited planning and editing, fast feedback, and transience of message. On the other hand, it contains features such as lack of visual and pragmatic clues, written format, and the physical absence of the interlocutors, which characterize written modes of communication. Because its conventions are not clearly specified, and because it borders on oral and written communication styles, email is a mode of communication that can pose particular challenges, especially if it has to be composed in a foreign language.

Some attempts have been made to establish guidelines for polite email behavior. Commonly recognized as a classic and trusted source when it comes to good manners, *Emily Post's Etiquette, 18th Edition*, devotes a complete chapter to computer communication. The general guideline stating that “polite electronic communication requires treating others as you would have them treat you, even when interacting in the virtual world” is followed by more specific rules of politeness (p. 240). The rules are as follows:

Human contact still matters

Watch what you say – and how you say it

Be careful when clicking ‘Send’

Address with care

Send delay

What’s your subject?

Keep it short and sweet

No yelling, please

Watch those emoticons

Check it over

In a nutshell, this handbook of etiquette suggests, first of all, that email should not replace personal interaction, but when used, should be carefully crafted. Because email is impersonal in nature, users often forget the good manners that they would normally follow in face-to-face interactions. Therefore, it is important to carefully check the contents and wording of a message before it is sent. It is also vital to respect the privacy of recipients and always consider sending individual rather than group messages as well as to delay sending the message (the guide does not specify any particular reasons for the latter). The next point to keep in mind is to formulate an informative yet succinct subject line and to write a message that is brief and concise. Finally the handbook advises against the use of all capital letters and a careful use of emoticons, which should be reserved for messages to close friends and family members (pp. 238-242).

Scheuermann and Taylor (1997) compiled an overview of published netiquette suggestions, and divided them into global netiquette recommendations, the 10 commandments of etiquette, and specific netiquette suggestions, totaling in 20 rules. The first set of what the authors refer to as ‘commandments’ are as follows (p. 270):

- I. Thou shalt not use a computer to harm other people.
- II. Thou shalt not interfere with other people’s computer work.
- III. Thou shalt not snoop around in other people’s files.
- IV. Thou shalt not use a computer to steal.
- V. Thou shalt not use a computer to bear false witness.
- VI. Thou shalt not use or copy software for which you have not paid.
- VII. Thou shalt not use other people’s computer resources without authorization.
- VIII. Thou shalt not appropriate other people’s intellectual output.

- IX. Thou shalt think about the social consequences of the program you write.
- X. Thou shalt use a computer in ways that show consideration and respect.

Whereas the rules above specify the norms of nonlinguistics online behavior, the ten commandments of etiquette and the specific netiquette suggestions focus more specifically on how language should be used in an online environment. The ten commandments of netiquette (p. 270) recommend that one be polite, brief, proud of the written message, precise in writing subject headings, considerate of audience, and careful with humor and sarcasm. More generally, they also suggest summarizing the content of the message one is responding to, not repeating what has been said (which seems contradictory), giving back to the community (which is vague), and citing appropriate references. Having reviewed several published articles on the topic, Scheuermann and Taylor also list the most frequent linguistic recommendations for Internet users (pp. 270-271):

Think first.

Write in upper and lower case.

Avoid abbreviations.

Be concise.

Avoid smileys.

Don't flame.

Don't take offense easily.

Don't evangelize.

Know the audience.

More specifically, Internet users are advised to delay writing a messages when angry; to use mixed case as it is a sign of respect (all upper case is like shouting, whereas all lower case is difficult to read); to fully write out words as they are easier to read than abbreviations, to be brief in order to show respect for the recipient's time; and to express feelings and emotions with appropriate word choice rather than emoticons. The rules also prompt internet users to think of email as the same as face-to-face communication, in order to avoid rudeness, not to make hasty interpretations about others' messages, to be humble and use reason in argumentation, and finally to become familiar with the audience before posting the message. The authors caution that the rules are not meant to be definitive, and should rather be used as a general guideline. Overall, they stress that individual internet users should strive for politeness and courtesy as the lack of thereof leads to a disadvantage in virtual communication.

In conclusion, because email is a relatively new medium of communication, its nature is still ambiguous. Some attempts to establish email conventions and rules of polite online behavior have been summarized above. Nevertheless, given its spoken/written hybridity, selecting appropriate linguistic means for email communication can be a challenge for native and nonnative speakers alike.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter overview

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of literature and motivation for research questions in the present study. The chapter begins with a section that presents studies on both perception and production of interlanguage requests, with an emphasis on the studies dealing with how nonnative speakers perceive the level of politeness in utterances. Second, the major studies that investigated the production of requests by native speakers and compared the strategies used to those typically chosen by native speakers are reviewed. Third, the chapter reviews research on requests in English and Russian. Next, studies that examined the use of email by second language learners, including studies that focus on electronic requests, are presented. The last part of the chapter presents those few interlanguage pragmatics studies that have investigated the perceptions of nonnative speakers based on the speech acts they produced. In its conclusion, the chapter identifies the gap in the research that the present study aims to fill and states the research questions.

Interlanguage pragmatics: speech acts

Requests

A great body of research on interlanguage pragmatics has been devoted to requests, perhaps because it is an FTA with a high level of imposition on the hearer, and one that poses a threat to the speaker's face. Native and nonnative speakers find themselves performing requests frequently, both in informal interactions and in academic contexts. Requests pose a challenge to second language learners because of their cross-linguistic variation: they can be more or less direct, and are performed using various strategies.

In the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) (1989), Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper identify a series of components that requests can be comprised of and list eight different strategy types of the performance of the 'request proper,' i.e., the head act. Thus, in addition to the head act request itself, a request can contain alerters, supportive moves, and internal modifications. Alerters precede the head act and function as attention-getters. Titles, last and first names, nicknames, endearments or offensive terms, personal pronouns, expressions such as 'Excuse me,' and combinations of these means can serve as alerters. Supportive moves are used to mitigate or aggravate requests. They can occur either before or after the head act, and include getting pre-commitment, giving reasons and explanations of the request, promising a reward, minimizing the imposition, threatening and moralizing. Internal modifications occur within the head act, and include both downgraders (i.e., syntactical, lexical and phrasal devices that soften the impact of the request) and upgraders (i.e., devices that increase the impact of the request). Examples of downgraders include the use of interrogative, subjunctive or conditional

(syntactic), and politeness markers such as ‘please’ or ‘Do you think...,’ hedges (e.g., avoiding precise propositional specification), downtoners (e.g., ‘perhaps’ or ‘possibly’), and appealers (e.g., ‘okay?’) (lexical and phrasal). Further examples of external modifications are provided in Table 1.

The head act itself can also be realized using a variety of strategies. Bloom-Kulka et al. (1989) list three levels of directness and nine strategy types: direct strategies (mood derivable, performatives, hedged performatives, obligation statements, and want statements); conventionally indirect strategies (suggestory formulae and query preparatory); and nonconventionally indirect strategies (strong hints and mild hints). Direct requests are the easiest to identify because the hearer is not required to make inferences in order to interpret them. The interpretation of conventionally indirect requests, on the other hand, depends on conventions of language, conversational

Table 1: External modifications of requests

Modifications	Examples
Lexical downgraders (optional additions to soften the force of the request by modifying it through individual words or phrases)	Please, possibly, just
Syntactic downgraders (mitigating the force of the request by changing the syntax)	‘could’ / ‘couldn’t instead of ‘can’ ‘would’ instead of ‘be’ (e.g., Would it be possible vs. Is it possible)
Upgraders (elements used to increase the impact of the request)	‘right now’
Mitigating supportive moves (giving a reason, promising a reward)	‘I missed the test because I had a toothache’ ‘I didn’t realize that we needed to take a test on subordination and I missed the deadline’
Aggravating supportive moves (threatening, demanding, facts)	‘You have to give me an opportunity to improve my grade’ ‘My grade for subordination is 50%’

principles, pragmalinguistic conventions, and contextualized conventions (pp. 38-39). In Blum-Kulka's words, conventionally indirect requests are 'based on general, often tacit consent in regard to both patterns of behavior and the meaning assigned to those patterns (p. 38). Whereas conventionally indirect requests can be interpreted based on the conventions established in the speech communities, nonconventionally indirect requests have to be interpreted based on contextual clues. Blum-Kulka et al. point out that as one moves along the scale from direct to nonconventionally indirect strategies, the process of identifying an utterance as a request becomes longer (p. 18). The summary of request strategies and strategy examples are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of different levels of directness used to realize request proper (adapted from Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, 1989, p. 18)

Level of directness	Strategy	Example
Direct	Mood derivable (imperatives)	Walk the dog!
	Performatives (the illocutionary force is explicitly named)	I am telling you to walk the dog.
	Hedged performatives	I would like you to walk the dog.
	Obligation statements	You'll have to walk that dog.
	Want statements	I want you to walk that dog.
Conventionally indirect	Suggestory formulae	How about walking the dog?
	Query preparatory (references to ability and willingness)	Would you mind walking the dog?
Nonconventionally indirect	Strong hints (partial reference to object or element that requires the act)	The dog is full of energy.
	Mild hints (no reference to object or element that requires the act)	It's gorgeous outside!

In his review of the studies of requests, Ellis (2003) describes two important sociolinguistic aspects of requests. The first characteristic is that requests require a significant amount of consideration for face due to their high level of imposition. To choose appropriate linguistic means to perform a request, the speaker needs to consider the relationship with the listener, the context, and the degree of imposition. The second aspect of requests is that different languages show different preferences for strategies conventionally used to perform requests. These choices affect both the head act as well as external and internal modifications (p. 168).

Studies on perception of requests

Pioneering research on requests was conducted by Clark and Lucy (1975) and Gibbs (1979). These researchers were concerned with the mental processing involved in the interpretation of direct and indirect requests. Clark and Lucy postulated that comprehension of indirect requests is a longer and more complex task than interpretation of direct requests, as the listener has to deduct the intended meaning from literal meaning. Their findings confirm this prediction. Gibbs, however, argues that the results of the Clark and Lucy study are valid only if subjects are tested on the processing of individual sentences. If, however, context is provided, the time needed to comprehend direct and indirect requests should be comparable. In other words, with the help of contextual clues, one does not have to compute the literal meaning of an utterance before understanding its indirect meaning.

Gibb's findings were confirmed by Erwin-Tripp et al. (1987) in experiments with child learners. In this study, both the interpretative model (indirect speech acts are first

interpreted literally) and the contextual model (the situation in which an indirect act is used as a basis for its interpretation) were tested. The study concluded that while younger children needed more explicitness, in general, demands for action (requests) can be interpreted contextually, without explicit language.

Walters (1979), Carrell and Konneker (1981), Fraser, Rintell and Walters (1980), Tanaka and Kawade (1982), Olshtain and Blum-Kulka (1985), and Van der Wijst (1995) have all researched the perception of requests. Walters (1979) compared how native speakers of American English and nonnative speakers of English perceive politeness in requests in English. The L2 subjects in this cross-sectional study came from 17 language backgrounds, including languages as diverse as Chinese, Armenian and Spanish. The subjects were given pairs of requests and asked to decide which member in each pair was more polite. The results suggest a high correlation between native and nonnative perception of politeness. However, nonnative judgments of extremely polite strategies (e.g., ‘may,’ ‘could’) and extremely impolite (e.g., imperative) were closer to native female than to native male judgments. Nonnative speakers also exhibited a higher degree of unanimity in their rankings of politeness strategies than did native speakers. These findings suggest that advanced learners of English can perceive the politeness of request strategies almost as well as native speakers do.

The results of Fraser, Rintell, and Walters (1980) also suggest that native and nonnative speaker perceptions of deference in requests are similar. In this study, native speakers of English and Spanish-speaking learners of English evaluated requests made in situations that varied in terms of the social status and gender of participants and the levels of imposition of the request. The requests in English were judged by native and nonnative

speakers of English, and the requests in Spanish were evaluated by native speakers of Spanish. While in general the judgments of the three groups were similar, the Spanish requests were evaluated as more deferential by the learners than the English ones. The results of this study suggest that, when it comes to perceptions, pragmatic transfer of L1 rules to L2 may not play as important a role as is commonly thought.

Interesting findings were also obtained by Carrell and Konneker (1981), who investigated how native and nonnative speakers of English judge levels of politeness in English requests. They created an eight-level hierarchy of requests based on syntactic and semantic features (mood, modals, and tense of modals). They assumed, based on Lakoff (1977) that the level of politeness increases in the following way: imperative mood > declarative mood > interrogative mood. The subjects were asked to rank eight request strategies from least polite to most polite. As in other studies, a high correlation was found between native and nonnative judgments. However, while the native group distinguished five levels of politeness, the nonnative group distinguished eight. For example, declaratives with a past tense modal ('I'd like X') and interrogatives with no modal ('Do you have X?'), which were ranked as equal by native speakers, were perceived as different by nonnative speakers. Carrell and Konneker suggest that this fact may be due to an 'over-sensitivity' to politeness resulting from language instruction, namely from the students' belief that distinct forms carry distinct meaning. These results are confirmed by Tanaka and Kawade (1982), whose subjects (American and Japanese) were also asked to rank a set of request sentences in English. Their results, too, suggest that advanced English learners perceive politeness of requests in a way similar to native speakers, yet with more distinct levels.

Van der Wijst's research (1995) stemmed from the observed difficulties in French-Dutch business communication caused by participants' perceived impoliteness which had been ascribed to differences in directness (e.g., Ulijn and Gorter (1989) and Merk (1987)). More specifically, Van der Wijst speculates that Dutch communicating in French may select expressions that are considered impolite by their French interlocutors (p. 484). This study consisted of an experiment in which Dutch and French participants were asked to rank the same request expressed using 19 formulations from least to most polite. Since the study found no significant differences in French and Dutch rankings, Van der Wijst concludes that Dutch and French perceive politeness in similar ways, and suggests the close similarities between the Dutch and the French culture as a potential explanation.

Shcherbakova (2010) explored how Russian learners of English (in English as a Foreign Language [EFL] context) perceive appropriateness and politeness of English utterances in various social situations. The study specifically focused on different the effect of different linguistic forms in the head act of requests. The results suggest that Russian EFL learners judge less conventionally indirect requests (e.g., 'Can you...?') as less appropriate in interactions with superiors (student-professor) than with an equal (student-student). More conventionally indirect requests (e.g., 'I was wondering if I could') were viewed as appropriate in student-professor interactions. While this study suggests that Russian learners of English may have an 'intuitive awareness' of what language structures are appropriate in different social contexts (p. 75), it does not demonstrate their ability to correctly use these structures.

Production studies

The next group of studies focused on production of requests by both native and nonnative speakers. Some studies of production of requests have focused on the differences between native and nonnative preferences for different types of politeness strategies. Most of them have used DCT (discourse completion task) or role plays as the elicitation method, and include Brunak and Scarcella (1979), House et al. (1989), Kasanga (2006), and Hacking (2008). In a pioneering study on pragmatic competence, Brunak and Scarcella (1979) examined the use of negative and positive politeness by Arabic speakers of English in role-play situations. In contrast to native speakers, the nonnative subjects in the study used in-group terms of address and endearment, but almost no slang or ellipses, and no other in-group language such, as ‘ya know,’ ‘I mean,’ or inclusive ‘we’ (positive politeness). They also used fewer or inappropriate hedges, statements of personal desire (‘want,’ ‘would like’) and direct strategies instead of hints, and almost no exclusive ‘we’ (negative politeness). The study concludes that unlike native speakers of English, nonnative speakers’ range of politeness features and their ability to differentiate the use based on the social context is limited. Additionally, Brunak and Scarcella pointed out that L2 learners use politeness features without having acquired their co-occurrence and distribution rules. As even the author stressed, however, the results of this study have to be interpreted with caution, as all nonnative subjects were males with the same L1 background.

Mills (1993) compared English and Russian requests produced by native speakers of English. The study collected natural speech samples from advanced learners and native speakers of Russian as well as responses on a DCT. The analysis revealed a preference

for conventionally indirect requests (interrogatives with negation of the hearer's intention to perform the requested action, e.g., 'Ty menja ne podvezeš?' 'You won't give me a ride') in the Russian data. According to Mills, such requests are highly inappropriate in English. While this requestive strategy was also used in nine nonnative speaker requests, this group of subjects also tended to use extensive justification for requests, lexical politeness markers ('požalujsta,' i.e., 'please'), and the literal Russian equivalent of conventionally indirect requests in English ('Could you?' or 'Can you?'), which is unconventional in Russian. The study concludes that these errors can be largely attributed to pragmatic transfer from English. While the constructions ('Can you?' or 'Could you') are grammatical in Russian, they are not conventionally used as request. Rather, they refer to one's ability to perform a task. For this reason, they should be considered pragmatic rather than grammatical transfer errors.

Within CCSARP, House (1989) investigated the distribution of 'please' and 'bitte' in English and German requests. The data used for this study came from native speakers of English, native speakers of German, and German learners of English. While there was no systematic and significant difference in how this marker of politeness was distributed in native English, native German, and nonnative English data, the German native speakers and German English learners used 'bitte' and 'please' relatively more frequently than native English speakers in certain situations. Most importantly, the study concluded that 'please' and 'bitte' are more likely to occur in what House refers to as 'standard situations,' i.e., those in which the hearer has a high obligation to comply with the request, the speaker has a strong right to pose a request, and the difficulty of performing the request is low. In the CCSARP data, these requests were typically

performed by the most direct requestive strategy, the imperative, or by a Query-Preparatory strategy (an ability question such as ‘Can you’ / ‘Could you’). In both cases ‘please’/’bitte’ was used as a downgrader.

Kasanga (2006) used combined methods (ethnographic observation, DCT data, and native-speaker judgments) to analyze request strategies of native Afrikaans speakers learning English. The results of this study suggest that learners’ repertoire of requestive strategies is smaller than that of native speakers and that they show preference for direct requests, which are often perceived as rude by native speakers (p. 141). Although this study did not investigate the effect of interaction with native speakers on the communicative competence, it concluded that this relationship should be examined.

Request strategies were also investigated by Lin (2009) who compared native Chinese, native English, and nonnative English (with Chinese as L1) data collected in a discourse completion task. The study suggests that, while conventionally indirect requests and similar modal verbs are used in both languages, the native and nonnative requests can differ in terms of form, function and distribution of these strategies. For example, even though Chinese has the equivalent of ‘Would you mind...?’ or ‘Would you like to...?’, these structures are not commonly used in requests (they were used rarely by the nonnative speakers of English in the study). The study concludes that further research is needed of not only head acts, but also of external modifications that support them.

Studies that investigated the effect of social distance on a speaker’s choice of politeness strategies in requests include Tanaka and Kawade (1982) and Tanaka (1988). Tanaka and Kawade presented their subjects with 10 request situations and asked them to select the request they considered the most appropriate in the given social context. The

situations were differentiated in terms of the distance between the speaker and the addressee. Overall, this study found that both native and nonnative speakers (advanced ESL learners of various L1 backgrounds) tend to use more polite strategies in distant situations than in close situations, but that in certain situations native speakers tend to use more polite strategies than nonnative speakers, who opt for the least polite strategies (e.g., need/want statements and imperatives). Tanaka elicited requests from native speakers of English and Japanese learners of English in two situations: asking a lecturer to lend a book, and asking a friend to lend a book. The study focused on Brown and Levinson's (1987) effect of social distance and the relative power of the speaker and hearer. It concluded that Japanese learners had a different situational distribution of positive and negative politeness strategies than native speakers of English, and that they were not able to differentiate levels of formality depending on the social distance from the interlocutor. The contrasting results from these two studies can be ascribed to different elicitation methods and (potentially) to varying levels of proficiency in the L2 learners (the subjects in Tanaka and Kawade were advanced ESL learners, whereas the level of proficiency in the Tanaka study is not specified).

The effect of social distance on the production of requests was also examined by Chen and Chen (2007), who analyzed requestive strategies in data from Taiwanese learners of English and native English speakers. Similar to Han (see below), this study suggests a general preference for the use of conventionally indirect requests regardless of L1 background. The effect of social distance in three different situations (a student asking another student to lend her lecture notes, a student asking a professor for an extension on a paper, and a professor asking a student to turn in a paper earlier) was also investigated.

The findings suggest that the social distance was perceived similarly by the native and nonnative group (both groups used the most direct requests in the professor situation).

One finding supported by a number of production studies, often referred to as the ‘waffle phenomenon’ (Ellis, 2003, p. 172), is that nonnative speakers tend to produce longer requests than native speakers. A study by House and Kasper (1986), which compared native English, German and Danish requests with nonnative German and Danish requests in five request situations, found that they differed in not only the choice of requestive strategies, but also in the overall length of utterances. For example, the learners used more supportive moves (e.g., pre-requests or reasons for requesting) and more direct strategies (imperatives) than did native speakers. The first difference (more supportive moves) resulted in the increased length of nonnative utterances. Based on Janicki (1986), House and Kasper suggest that this nonnative verbosity is inappropriate and can ‘antagonize’ native-speaker listeners in real interactions (p. 1283).

Similar results were reported by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986), who used the Hebrew and English native and nonnative speaker data collected for the CCSARP with a special focus on the length of the utterance. The results suggest that nonnative speakers tend to use more external modification in requests, while native speakers needed “fewer words to get their message across” (p. 170). Blum-Kulka and Olshtain argue that this inappropriate length of utterance can lead to *pragmatic failure* (a term proposed by Thomas, 1983), i.e., a misunderstanding of the interlocutors’ intentions. The authors further claim that utterances that are too long violate one of the Grician submaxims of manner which states speakers should ‘Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)’ (Grician, 1975, p. 79). Comparable results were obtained by Færch and Kasper (1989), who also

used the data collected for CCSARP and examined the internal and external modifications in requests produced by native speakers of English, Danish and German, and Dutch speakers of English and German.

Finally, a few studies have focused on speech acts and the development of communicative competence. Olshstein and Blum-Kulka (1985) argue that an extended stay in the country where an L2 is spoken results in an approximation of nonnative to native perceptions of politeness in the target language. Their participants - native speakers of Hebrew, and American learners of Hebrew - were presented with four request situations and asked to choose the most appropriate request out of six request variants. The findings suggest that the two groups differed in their choices of request in their respective L1: native Hebrew speakers showed a preference for positive politeness direct requests, while native English speakers preferred negative politeness and indirect requests. However, over time, changes in the nonnative responses were observed: the longer the stay in the target culture, the closer the approximation to the native speaker judgments.

Francis (1997) investigated the effects of proficiency levels (from elementary to advanced) on the formulation of requests by adult nonnative speakers of English. The requests were elicited in three different settings: public office, private office, and classroom. The study found that while there was little variation in requests strategies, overall, lower proficiency students used no downgraders, while intermediate and advanced students did.

Rose (2000) conducted a cross-sectional study of pragmatic development among students of English whose L1 was Cantonese. This study investigated requests, apologies,

and responses to compliments in scenarios of varying levels of imposition (low and high) and the status of the hearer (lower and higher than the speaker). As far as requests are concerned, the study revealed a preference for conventionally indirect strategies and little situational variation. However, lower proficiency learners showed a heavy reliance on direct requests, which, as Rose pointed out, may suggest that this strategy is acquired early on in the development of pragmatic competence.

Owen (2002) conducted extensive research on the development of pragmatic competence, as well as the effect of proficiency level and study-abroad experience on the production of requests in Russian. The Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) was used for elicitation, and the requests were analyzed using the CCSARP framework. The results of this study suggest a correlation between both the proficiency level and the study abroad experience and communicative competence. In other words, the requests produced by learners of higher proficiency levels approximated native speaker choices. At the same time, the study abroad experience was found to be a strong factor in the approximation to native-speaker request preferences.

The effect of the length of residence in the target language community (Korean learners of English residing in the US) on the development of requests was studied in detail by Han (2005). In this research, directness levels, choice of mitigation, and external modification were examined using DCT for elicitation and CCSARP for analysis. There was no significant effect of the length of residence on the use of directness (the subjects showed a clear preference for conventionally indirect requests) or on the choice of mitigation strategies. However, this study suggests a correlation between the length of residence and the appropriate (native-like) external modifications.

Felix-Brasdefer (2007) studied the development of request strategies in three groups of native speakers of English from beginning to advanced levels of Spanish instruction. The study concluded that pragmatic competence increased with the increasing level of proficiency. Beginning learners relied primarily on direct request strategies, whereas intermediate and advanced learners were using progressively more indirect strategies, thus approximating native-speaker choices.

Finally, Schauer (2004) conducted a longitudinal study in a study abroad context focusing on the acquisition of request strategies by German learners of English. The main finding of this study was that lexical downgraders (e.g., 'please') are acquired earlier than syntactic modifications (e.g., past tense modals, tag questions). Like several other studies, this study also found a correlation between the length of stay in the target culture and the contextual and linguistic appropriateness of requests. Overall, studies that examine pragmatic development in a second language suggest that while achieving sociolinguistic competence is a challenge even for advanced learners, there may be a correlation between the complexity of speech act strategies and the level of second language proficiency.

Requests in English and Russian

In addition to the studies by Mills (1993), Owen (2002), Hacking (2008), and Sherbakova (2010), the major studies that specifically focused on requests in Russian as compared to requests in English include Ogiermann (2009) and Dong (2010). Both studies looked at cross-cultural differences in production of the request head act as well as the external modification.

Ogiermann (2009) analyzed Polish, Russian, English and German requests, apologies, and complaints. In particular, this study investigated the differences in the directness of the strategies preferred in each of the languages. Following the interlanguage pragmatics tradition, Ogiermann used a DCT to collect data. She found that the four languages differed in terms of how frequently they used various strategies. Interestingly, English and German displayed some similar properties as compared to Polish and Russian. For instance, imperatives were more frequently used by the Slavic informants than by the Western-European informants (p. 208). On the other hand, interrogatives were more frequently used by the German and English informants (p. 209). Overall, Ogiermann suggests that requests are perceived as less face-threatening in Slavic cultures than they are in the Western European cultures (p. 210).

Dong (2010) conducted a linguistic comparison of English, Russian and Chinese requests in terms of the internal and external modifications in academic settings preferred by the three groups of subjects following the CCSARP model. Dong found that the requests in these three languages differed to some extent in terms of alerters, request proper strategies, as well as internal and external modifications. While the preferred core request strategy in all three languages was the preparatory 'can' or 'could' (p. 355), the study found differences in terms of both external modifications (for example, speakers of American English and Russian use attention-getters in a similar way, but differ in their use of terms of address), and internal modifications (for instance, while the English informants preferred the preparatory strategy, Russians showed a preference for the mood-derivable [imperative] strategy) (p. 357). The study concludes that, narrowly

speaking, cultures differ when it comes to the preferred requestive strategies and, broadly speaking, when it comes to the “culture-specific sociolinguistic rules” (p. 369).

Overall, what can be seen from the findings of the cross-linguistic studies of speech acts is that learning another language entails much more than mastering its grammar and lexicon. In order to use the system appropriately, learners have to develop an awareness of how the context affects the choice of linguistic means. Whereas there may be an overlap in the possible grammatical categories available to realize a given speech act, how contextual factors are weighed and which structures are conventionally used to perform the act may vary across languages and cultures.

Email and second language learners

Electronic requests

More recently, studies have focused on interlanguage requests in email. The Hardford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) study is precursor in two ways: because it examines requests from students to faculty using natural data, and because it focuses on electronic rather than spoken requests. The requests in this study were first assigned either a Positive Affect Request (PAR) value, i.e., a request that does not trigger some negative affect; or a Negative Affect Request (NAR) value, i.e., a request that triggers some negative affect. The requests were then analyzed in terms of the linguistic forms used (e.g., imperative, need/want statements, downgraders), level of imposition (low vs. high) and content (time, acknowledgment of imposition, and the proffered explanation for the request). The results of this study suggest that nonnative speakers tend to use fewer downgrades in their NAR requests than do native speakers, fail to acknowledge the cost

of the imposition to the recipient, and overuse institutional reasons. The researchers concluded that in order to have a request granted, students need to acknowledge the imposition, use mitigators to downgrade the message, and generally allow room for negotiations (p. 67), which some of their nonnative subjects failed to do.

Some other studies investigated requests in student emails to faculty. Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth (2002) focused on how learners use pragmatic elements associated when negotiating the completion and evaluation of course work. The study compared request strategies used in email by native and nonnative speakers of English who were graduate students at a major American university. The findings suggest that the request strategies used by nonnative speakers were more direct than the ones used by native speakers, and that while native speakers used more syntactic modification, nonnative speakers showed a preference for lexical modification (in particular ‘please’).

Another study, which used natural email data and followed the CCSARP framework for analysis, was conducted by Biesenbach-Lucas (2007). The main focus of this study was analysis of request head acts and degree of directness. Contrary to studies of spoken requests (e.g., see House and Kasper (1986) and Tanaka and Kawade (1982) above), this study found no significant differences between the levels of directness used by native and nonnative speakers in email. However, native speakers in Biesenbach-Lucas’s study tended to use more syntactic politeness devices (such as past and progressive tense), whereas nonnative speakers opted for lexical modifiers (such as ‘please’) and showed preference for one learned formulaic structure (‘could you’) across a range of requests. Even though the study did not measure participants’ awareness of the force of politeness strategies, Biesenbach-Lucas concludes that because both groups

of participants used more indirect strategies in higher imposition requests, they must be aware of the role of situational factors. However, because NNS showed an overreliance on one particular strategy, they may be lacking in their ability to determine which request strategy is the most appropriate (p. 74).

A longitudinal case study of a Taiwanese student's email requests (Chen, 2006) provides some insights into the origins of the differences between how native and nonnative speakers of English formulate email requests. For example, the participant stated that she used direct requests (need and want statements) because she thought that these would communicate the urgency of her requests. This study also observed that the student's ability to make requests of her instructors via email improved over time. The student's requests changed from need statements (i.e., 'I want...', 'I need...') to query preparatory (i.e., Can you...?). The use of lexico-syntactic modification (for example 'Would you mind...?' or 'I'm wondering if you could...?') also increased over time. These results are consistent with findings from earlier research (e.g., see Olshstein and Blum-Kulka (1985) above) suggesting that the appropriateness of politeness strategies in requests is a function of the length of residence in the target language culture.

Finally, the preference for direct request strategies in nonnative speaker email requests was pointed out by Lee (2004), who also used the CCSARP segmentation and coding to study requests made by Chinese speakers of English in emails to their teachers. This study found that the subjects were using direct request strategies and requestive hints. The study, however, did not compare native and nonnative requests. Instead, it concluded that Chinese English learners' perception of the social distance between themselves and their instructors is reflected in their emails.

As can be seen from the cross-linguistic studies on speech acts in email, native and nonnative speakers of English write electronic messages in different ways. Overall, emails written by NNS have been found to pose higher levels of imposition on faculty than do the ones written by NS. NNS have shown a lack of the appropriate request strategies to preserve the face of the addressees. As a result of higher threats to face in NNS emails, the recipients of these messages can be expected to not only respond differently, but also perceive NS senders and NNS senders in different ways.

Judgments of nonnative requests by native speakers

The studies of particular interest to this dissertation are the ones that investigate the perceived level of appropriateness and politeness in requests produced by nonnative speakers as perceived by native speakers. Findings from email communication (see above) suggest that NNS ability to use language appropriately develops over time and with exposure to different contexts. They may not be able to handle situations that require a specific type of politeness and specific linguistic features. As a result, their utterances may be perceived as impolite. However, as Hendricks (2010) points out, to date there have been very few interlanguage pragmatics studies that examine how native speakers perceive and evaluate nonnative utterances. This section summarizes those few studies that investigate the perception of nonnative requests by native speakers.

The Hardford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) study discussed above examined the effect that native and nonnative email requests produced on faculty. They distinguished between requests that caused a negative response (Negative Affect Requests or NAR) and those that had either positive or neutral effect (Positive Affect Requests or PAR) (p. 56).

The PAR messages typically included the following external modifications: downgraders, acknowledgements of responsibility on the part of the student, apologies for inconvenience, and justifications for the request. NAR messages, on the other hand, posed higher levels of imposition on the recipient partially because the student may not have had the right to express the request in the first place, and partially because the student expressed the request using need/want statements, failed to acknowledge the imposition and give options, or did not contain downgraders. Overall, Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) reported that emails sent by graduate NNS students to faculty had a negative effect on perlocution, i.e., the way in which an utterance affects the addressee.

Biesenbach-Lucas (2007), whose study was also discussed in the previous section, did not directly focus on the effect of electronic requests sent by nonnative speakers of English on the recipient; however, as a result of the differences between NS and NNS request strategy use that emerged from the study, Biesenbach-Lucas suggests that NNS' "language production tends to diverge from NS norms, which often results in negative assessment of their personalities" (p. 75). She therefore suggests that nonnative speakers can benefit from explicit and awareness-raising instruction on email conventions and request strategies.

Hacking (2008), whose subjects were advanced learners of Russian at an American University, and whose responses on a DCT were evaluated by native speaker raters, investigated requests as well as apologies and refusals. The raters were asked to decide whether the nonnative responses on the DCT were socially appropriate or inappropriate. While the requests were rated as the most appropriate of the elicited speech acts, apologies tended to be the least appropriate. Raters' comments indicate that failure

to perform a given speech act in a native-like manner can result from an absence of some element of that speech act deemed crucial by the native speaker. Thus, while many respondents failed to include the head element in apologies, all participants included the head elements in requests and refusals.

Finally, Hendricks (2010) researched how native English speakers evaluate email requests produced by Dutch speakers of English. It has to be noted that the main goal of the study was to examine whether judges' evaluations of senders were affected by the extent and variety of syntactic modifications of requests. For this reason, while the original messages were obtained through a DCT, the messages presented to the evaluators were syntactically modified by the researcher. The evaluators rated both the comprehensibility of the message and the personality of the sender. The messages that were lacking elaborate external modifications were evaluated negatively. As a result, Hendricks proposes that "speech act modification may be a potential area for pragmatic failure" (p. 237). Her findings suggest that requests that lack elaborate modifications can be evaluated as disagreeable by native speakers of English (p. 238).

Motivation for the study

In conclusion, while the majority of perception studies have found that nonnative speaker perceptions of politeness in requests do not differ significantly from those of native speakers, the findings of production studies are less uniform. It appears that even though native-speaker norms are more closely approximated with the increase of language proficiency and as a result of study abroad experience, production of contextually appropriate requests may still pose challenges for second language learners.

The difficulties are due to either the inappropriate length of the request (waffle effect), or the inability to differentiate strategies based on the distance between the speaker and the recipient, or to provide appropriate external modifications.

To date, studies have examined perception and production of speech acts, the importance of social distance in selection of strategies, the impact of L2 proficiency and residence in the L2 culture on the appropriateness of strategies, and the selection and sequence of speech act components. Studies have used different elicitation methods (the most common being DCTs and role plays) and both oral and written data (including data from electronic mail). Three areas of major importance have been identified: the level of linguistic competence, transfer, and social status. Studies seem to agree that, at least as far as perception is concerned, granted sufficient exposure to the L2, learners can approximate native-speaker judgments.

However, despite a great body of research on production of second language speech acts, researchers are still far from understanding how speech acts produced by nonnative speakers are perceived by native speakers; namely, if they perceive them as socially appropriate and polite. Several studies conclude that more research is needed in this area. In fact, Kasper and Schmidt (1996) explicitly state that contrastive studies of native versus nonnative speech act production do not provide satisfactory answers that could inform creation of pedagogically relevant materials and curricula. Specifically, they claim that “simply identifying differences does not inform us which of those differences may matter in interaction. Some differences between NS norms and L2 performance may result in negative stereotyping by NS message recipients, whereas others may be heard as somewhat different but perfectly appropriate alternatives” (p.156).

Additionally, most research so far has investigated speech acts in English as a Second or Foreign Language. In today's world in which people communicate across languages and cultures on a daily basis, it is important for us to gain a better understanding of interlanguage pragmatics of speakers of second languages other than English. Finally, speech acts in the newly-emerged electronic means of communication, namely email, need to be examined in more detail, in more languages and in more diversified scenarios as to date studies on speech acts in email have almost exclusively used messages written by students to faculty. More insight into electronic communication is needed not only because the use of this medium has increased in academic settings, but also because it is the most commonly used medium in the corporate world.

This dissertation aims to address some of the aforementioned gaps in research. First, based on Kasper and Schmidt's (1996) recommendation and on the fact that few studies to date investigated this question, the present study investigates native speaker perceptions of nonnative requests. Secondly, in order to extend the body of research on languages other than English, the study focuses on requests in Russian. In particular, because both Lin (2009) and Hendricks (2010) explicitly point out to external modifications in requests by nonnative speaker requests as an area for further research, this study examines the differences between external modifications used in requests produced by native versus nonnative speakers. Finally, in order to provide more insights into the use of newly emerged genre of email, the study focuses on electronic requests. The specific research questions are presented in the next section.

Research questions

The present study examines electronic requests produced by native and nonnative (American) speakers of Russian. The results provide important insights into the field of second language pragmatics. The study poses the following research questions:

- (1) Are electronic requests formulated by native and American speakers of Russian evaluated as similar or different by native speakers of Russian?
- (2) What strategies are used by native and nonnative speakers of Russian in email to formulate the head acts of requests?
- (3) What internal and external modifications of requests are used by native and nonnative speakers of Russian in electronic requests (e.g., lexical or syntactic downgraders, upgraders, mitigating and aggravating supportive moves)?

The details regarding the study design, participants, and methodology are explicated in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 3

STUDY DESIGN

Chapter overview

This chapter provides detailed information about the study design and procedures. It begins by describing the two groups of study participants: native speakers of Russian, and American learners of Russian. Next, the chapter provides a justification for the use of the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) as a data collection method as well as provides detailed information about the proposed DCT scenarios. Finally, it explains the procedures used to answer the study questions stated in Chapter 2. For each of the questions, the methods of data collection and analysis are explained.

Participants

The participants in this study were native speakers of Russian residing in Russia ($n=20$), 7 males and 13 females, ages 18-35; and English-speaking nonnative speakers of Russian residing in the United States ($n=21$), 13 males and 8 females, ages 18-40 (only one participant was older than 35). The native speakers of Russian were students or alumni of major Russian universities. The American participants were third and fourth year students of Russian at the University of Utah, or alumni who had completed at least 3 years of Russian prior to graduation. The majority of the American participants were

former missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints who had served a church mission (between 1.5 to 2 years) in a Russian speaking country, where they interacted in Russian between 7 to 9 hours per day. Before the mission, they all had completed 2-month long language training at a Missionary Training Center. Three of the remaining participants had spent some time (between 2 to 8 weeks) in a Russian speaking country prior to enrolling in the study, where they interacted in Russian between 5 to 9 hours per day. 10% of the American participants reported that they feel comfortable using Russian in all environments. The remaining 90% reported that they feel comfortable using Russian in most situations.

All participants, both Russian and American were college students or college graduates, using email on a daily basis to communicate for personal and professional (e.g., school, work) purposes. Before enrolling in the study, participants were asked to complete a background questionnaire in order to collect information about their demographics and former second-language experience: native language and exposure to English in case of the Russian subjects, and the native language and the number of years and type of instruction learning Russian in case of the American subjects. The questionnaires also helped identify and remove from analysis the data from heritage speakers of Russian. The questionnaire for American learners of Russian is provided in Appendix A. The questionnaire that native speakers of Russian were asked to complete is provided in Appendix B. The Russian participants took the questionnaire in Russian, but its English translation is also included in the appendices.

The raters were three native speakers of Russian with no or minimal teaching experience in the United States. The raters were between 26 and 50 years old, and all held

academic degrees. Two of the raters had college teaching experience in Russia, and held advanced academic degrees (master's or higher). They also used email to communicate with students in their classes.

Materials and procedures

To ensure that the American participants possessed the grammatical competence necessary to formulate requests in Russian, they were first asked to take a test that elicits grammatical structures commonly used in Russian requests. The test was developed specifically for the purpose of this study. First, pilot data were collected from three native speakers of Russian (males and females) who were asked to respond to the same scenarios that were later used in the DCT. Based on their responses, it was determined that to compose requestive emails in Russian, the nonnative speaker participants should be able to produce the following grammatical structures in Russian: imperatives, personal pronouns in the dative case, conditional sentences, polite forms of address, and the conjugation of the verb 'писать' (write). Thus, the administration of the test to the participants helped eliminate the possibility that the participants lacked the grammatical competence necessary for successful completion of the task. In other words, it helped ensure that the collected data reflect their sociopragmatic competence. The complete pretest is provided in Appendix C.

After completing the questionnaire and taking the Pretest (in case of the nonnative speakers of Russian), all participants were asked to compose four emails. The email data were collected using DCT. This data collection method was developed by Blum-Kulka (1982, following Levenston, 1975) to compare speech acts produced by native and

nonnative speakers of Hebrew. Traditionally, a DCT test consists of a series of scripted dialogues representing different social situations. First, a short description is presented (including the setting, social roles and status of participants), followed by an incomplete dialogue, which participants are asked to complete. To do so, they have to produce the speech act under investigation.

There are several reasons why this particular method of data collection was chosen for the present study. The first two reasons are consistent with Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper's justification for the use of the DCT in the CCSARP (1989). First, as they point out, although Labov (1984) argues that linguistic observation should lead to collection of "the way people use language when they are not being observed" (1972, p. 209), it is not feasible because of the observer's paradox or experimenter's effect, i.e., the fact that the collected data are affected by the presence of the interviewer; hence the appeal of the DCT. Secondly, using the naturalistic observation supported by Labov, rather than the DCT, would make the data collection process extremely time inefficient. Finally Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) argue that the DCT is superior to more direct methods of observation in that it allows for collection of more stereotypical responses. I concur with the first two reasons but not with the third. Individual variation is a characteristic of natural languages, and more stereotypical data can still contain considerable variation. Overall, the benefits of the DTC clearly outweigh this one disadvantage.

There are three more reason why this study used the DCT for data collection. First, in naturalistic data certain structures may be underrepresented. For instance, if naturalistic data had been collected for this study, they may not have contained a

sufficient number of requests for analysis. Using DCT allows for, in Chaudron's words (2003), elicitation of "an extensive range of potentially natural, unmonitored learner performance appropriate to a given genre of speech behavior or style" (p. 773). Moreover, it has been suggested that it is the most optimal available data collection method used to study politeness norms across languages and cultures (Ogierman, 2009, p. 195). Finally, this method has been used in several studies that investigated production of speech acts by both native and native-speakers, and it was employed here in an attempt to situate this study in the rich tradition of speech act research.

The DCT in this study contained four scenarios eliciting requests (Appendix D). The scenarios were originally formulated in English and then translated into Russian. Both native and nonnative speakers of Russian received the Russian version of the scenarios. This was done to ensure that the participants focused on the request itself rather than on trying to recall individual words needed to construct the message (e.g., extension, research paper). Because testing the knowledge of topic-specific vocabulary is not the focus of the study, the native speakers of English were also allowed to use a Russian-English and English-Russian dictionary.

The participants were asked to respond to the situations by typing an email written to the person specified in the situation and emailing it to the provided email address, which was created solely for the purpose of this study. The reason why only four scenarios were included in this study (versus eight request scenarios in Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper [1989], and four request scenarios in Hacking [2008]) is because writing a complete email including standard email elements and the message is more time consuming and cognitively demanding than completing a DCT where only the missing

speech act needs to be provided. Including four scenarios in the DCT enabled collection of 80 native and 80 nonnative speaker responses.

All four scenarios were constructed in such a way as to minimize the artificiality of the task, i.e., to justify the use of the Russian language and to elicit very specific requests. Therefore, all fictitious addressees are Russian professors at Russian universities, and the subjects were provided with sufficient information to imagine themselves needing to communicate with the addressees via email. The scenarios were as follows:

S1: A student asks a professor at St. Petersburg University about the graduate program in Russian literature and his/her chances of getting accepted to the program.

S2: A student asks a professor at Moscow State University for a letter of recommendation.

S3: An exchange student at Novosibirsk State University requests an appointment with a professor to discuss results of a recent test.

S4: A student studying at Tomsk State University requests an appointment to discuss the final paper.

Complete scenarios and instructions in English and Russian are presented in Appendix D. American subjects received instructions in English, but as stated above, the scenarios presented to them were in Russian.

In all of the scenarios, the status of the exchange participants and, therefore, the power dimension, was stable (student to professor). The level of imposition of all four requests was relatively high because in all situations the student is requesting a provision

of time and expertise from the instructor (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 77). Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) more specifically point out that requests that ask faculty to bend rules, or which require them to invest time to either prepare for a meeting or provide feedback, carry a high level of imposition (p. 60). In all four situations, the addressees do not have high obligation to comply with the request, and the requesters have a relatively high difficulty in constructing the request as they have 'personal stake' (Sadock, 1974, p. 121) in the response, and have to take into account the difference of position between themselves and faculty, and possibly justify why they are making the request in the first place.

For all four scenarios, the participants were asked to compose their message in an email format using a computer and an email account. The rationale behind asking the participants to write emails rather than giving them a worksheet to complete is that while they were informed that the scenarios and the recipients are fictitious, it is hoped that this procedure reduced the artificiality of the task. Thus, to complete the DCT scenarios, the subjects were asked to email their messages to an email address created for the purpose of the study. The responses were coded and their real names and email addresses removed from the data. The participants' anonymity was assured by assigning each participant a random number. Their email addresses were not stored; they were deleted from the data collection mailbox as soon as their messages and questionnaires were received, assigned a random number, and stored in a password secured file.

English control data

In addition to the data collected from native speakers of Russian and American learners of Russian, responses to similar scenarios were collected from a group of 12 native speakers of English. Both the scenarios and the responses in the control part of the study were collected in English. This is a typical DCT procedure which allows the investigator to compare second language data to first language data and examine it for cases of pragmatic transfer, i.e., ‘the influence exerted by learners’ pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information’ (Kasper, 1992, p. 207). The scenarios presented to this group of participants are listed in Appendix E.

Follow-up interviews

After the email data were collected and a preliminary analysis was conducted, six nonnative speaker subjects were selected to participate in a follow-up semistructured interview in which they were asked to justify the linguistic choices they made in their emails. They were also asked about their thoughts on the impact of the culture they grew up in on the way they formulate electronic requests. These interviews were not meant to be comprehensive; rather, they were used as a pilot component. They shed some light on the differences between the requestive strategies used by the two groups, but the interview format had not been pretested. The data from the interviews were used in the interpretation of the findings. Sample interview questions are provided in Appendix F.

Data analysis

Research question one

Recall that the first research question is concerned with the rating of electronic requests by native Russian raters. The research question is restated below:

- (1) Are electronic requests formulated by native and American speakers of Russian evaluated as similar or different by native speakers of Russian?

Thus, the first part of the present study investigated the possibility that electronic requests performed by native speakers of Russian are judged to be more sociopragmatically appropriate and polite than those written by nonnative speakers. The underlying construct was the subjects' communicative performance, and more specifically its sociolinguistic component (Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Swain and Canale, 1981), i.e., the ability to produce speech acts that are context-appropriate. The measure of such appropriateness used in this study was a 5-point Likert scale rating by three native speakers of Russian, with one being the least socially appropriate and impolite, and five being the most socially appropriate and polite. Thus, the dependent variable in this study was the level of appropriateness and politeness, whereas the independent variable was native vs. nonnative competence in Russian.

Following Hacking (2008), in order to ensure that messages were rated as appropriate or inappropriate based on the use of politeness strategies and not grammatical competence alone, a question about the comprehensibility of the response was included on the rating sheet. This question was also graded on a scale of one to five, with one being the least comprehensible and five being comprehensible.

To maximize the number of responses to each message, a within-subjects design was used. Namely, all participants were asked to read and evaluate all NS and all NNS messages. The raters were asked to read each situation and to imagine that they were the intended addressee of the message. They were instructed to carefully read each response and respond to three five-point Likert scale items following immediate intuitions, without overanalyzing. They were also asked to highlight anything in the message that may have prompted them to assign it a lower score on any of the three scales. The instructions for raters and the rating sheet (in Russian and in English) are provided in Appendix G. The raters received these instructions in Russian.

Research questions two and three

Recall that the remaining two research questions are formulated as follows:

- (2) What strategies are used by native and nonnative speakers of Russian in email to formulate the head acts of requests?
- (3) What internal and external modifications of requests are used by native and nonnative speakers of Russian in electronic requests?

Several studies on speech acts follow the framework of analysis developed by Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) for the CCSARP (see, for example, Francis [1997], Biesenbach-Lucas (2007), or Hacking [2008], above). As mentioned in Chapter 2, their framework distinguishes three levels of directness and nine different strategies that can be used to perform the head act of request (see Table 2). The present study used the CCSARP framework of analysis in its examination of head acts; thus, it distinguished the following categories of requests (Blum-Kulka et al. [1989], pp. 273-294):

- Direct – directives whose content can be determined from its linguistic content alone
- Conventionally indirect – ambiguous utterances with two specific interpretations (one of them being a request) which can be inferred based on the context
- Nonconventionally indirect – ambiguous utterances with multiple possible, speaker-dependent interpretations, one of which can be inferred to be a requests

Similarly, the study followed the CCSARP in its analysis of internal and external modifications. The following categories were distinguished:

- Downgraders – lexical (e.g., ‘please’), phrasal (e.g., ‘will you?’), and syntactic (e.g., conditionals, tenses) modifications that reduce the illocutionary force of the request
- Upgraders – modifications that intensify the illocutionary force of the request (e.g., ‘terrible,’ ‘bloody’)
- Alerters – titles, names, terms of endearment, personal pronouns
- Supportive moves – external modifications that either mitigate or aggravate the request (e.g., ‘Could you do me a favor?’ or promise of a reward)

This descriptive analysis was conducted by the primary investigator and the findings provide a more in-depth understanding of the differences between NS and NNS messages. These results, together with the data from semistructured interviews, complement the statistical results in that they provide information about how and why the emails written by the two groups of participants differ.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Chapter overview

This chapter presents a summary of the findings for both groups of participants. After the electronic requests from DCTs were rated by native speakers of Russian, the data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The central tendency for each group is provided using the mean and the median. The standard deviation and the standard error for both groups are stated.

These data were also analyzed using inferential statistics. To examine whether the differences of appropriateness rating between the native Russian and nonnative group are significant, one-way ANOVA was used to compare the variability of scores within each group with that between groups.

Data were also obtained based on the strategies that were used to perform head acts and internal and external modifications included the types of strategies and supportive moves used by native and nonnative speakers of Russian. Once these data were quantified, numerical and percentile data for different types of strategies and supportive moves used by the two groups of subjects were obtained.

Descriptive statistics

Native speakers of Russian produced a total of 80 email messages (four messages per participant). The NS messages received ratings between 3-5 (higher is better) on the comprehensibility scale, between 2-5 on the social appropriateness scale, and between 3-5 on the politeness scale. Table 3 contains a summary of the range of scores for nonnative speaker messages, while the histogram in Figure 2 shows the frequencies of the scores. By far, the most frequently assigned score in this group was 5, followed by 4 (148 instances). Very few messages were scored at 3 (42 instances) or 2 (4 instances), and none received the score of 1.

The native speaker group, as a whole, received the following mean scores on the three dimensions: 4.6 for comprehensibility, 4.6 for appropriateness, and 4.6 for politeness. Table 4 shows the mean scores assigned to the messages written by the NS group broken down by scenario, and the calculated standard deviations. Standard error was never higher than ≤ 0.1

A total of 84 email messages were elicited from the nonnative speaker group (4 messages per participant). One participant's data had to be removed from the analysis because her declared first language was not English. Another participant's data were not included because she is a heritage speaker of Russian. Finally, one participant's pretest

Table 3: Range of NS scores

Scenario	Comprehensibility	Appropriateness	Politeness
1	3-5	2-5	3-5
2	4-5	2-5	2-5
3	4-5	3-5	3-5
4	2-5	3-5	3-5

score was below 70% and therefore his data were excluded.

The NNS messages received ratings between 2-5 on the comprehensibility scale, between 2-5 on the social appropriateness scale, and 1-5 on the politeness scale. Table 5 contains a summary of the range of scores assigned to nonnative speaker messages by individual raters, and the histogram in Figure 3 illustrates the frequency of the different scores. As can be seen, the most frequent NNS score was 4 (350 instances), followed by 5 (188 instances), and 3 (181 instances). A score of 2 or less was assigned 37 times. The nonnative speaker group as a whole received the following mean scores on the three dimensions: 4.2 for comprehensibility, 3.7 for appropriateness, and 3.9 for politeness. Table 6 shows the mean scores assigned to the messages written by the nonnative speaker group broken down by scenario, and the calculated standard deviations. As was the case with the native speakers, standard error never exceeded ≤ 0.1 .

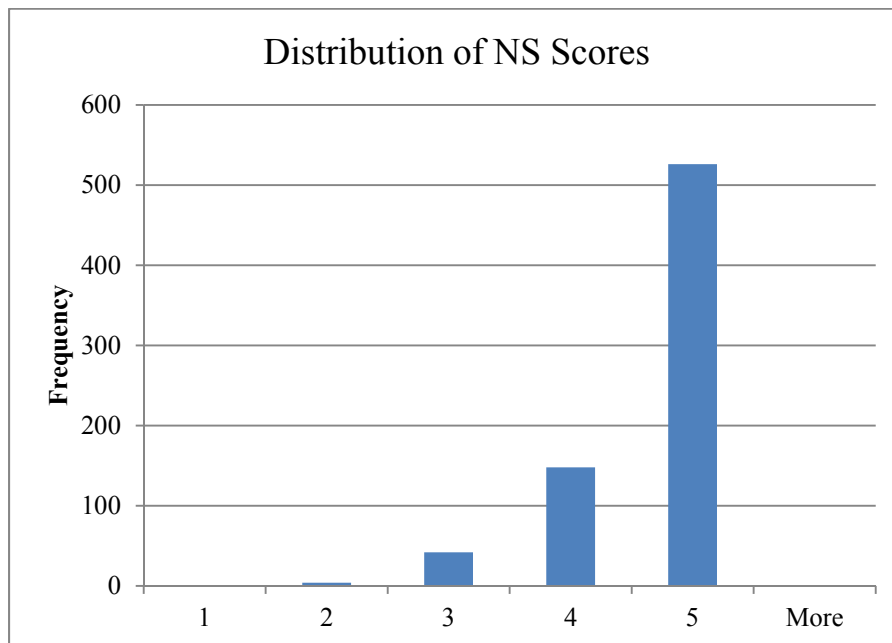


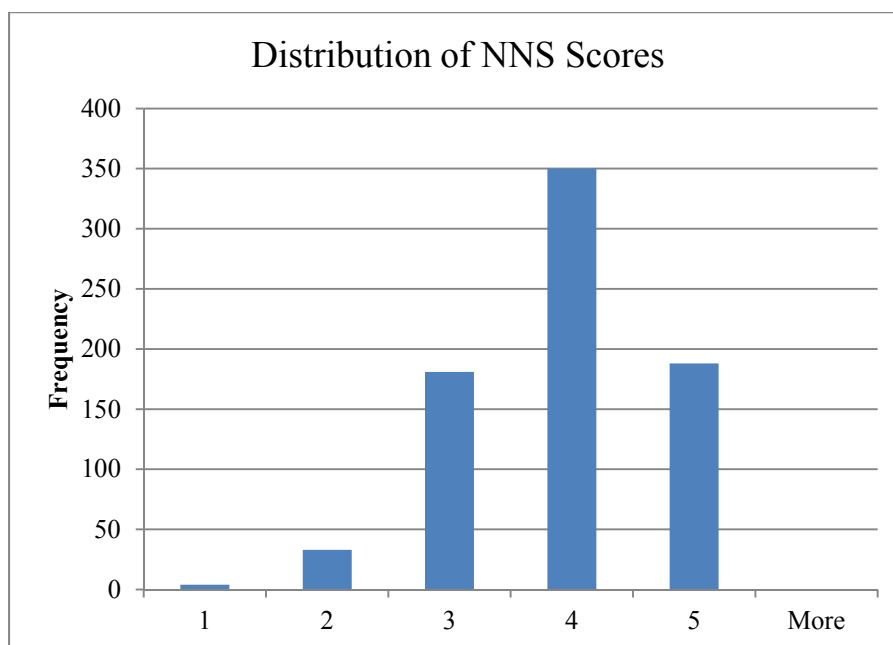
Figure 2: Distribution of NS scores

Table 4: NS ratings: mean scores and standard deviations

Scenario	Comprehensibility		Appropriateness		Politeness	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	4.8	0.3	4.5	0.5	4.5	0.7
2	5.0	0.6	4.4	0.1	4.5	0.6
3	5.0	0.1	4.6	0.3	4.7	0.3
4	4.9	0.1	4.5	0.1	4.7	0.1

Table 5: Range of NNS scores

Scenario	Comprehensibility	Appropriateness	Politeness
1	2-5	2-5	1-5
2	2-5	2-5	2-5
3	2-5	2-5	2-5
4	3-5	2-5	1-5

**Figure 3:** Distribution of NNS scores

As expected, native speaker messages received higher mean scores than nonnative speaker messages. Average native speaker scores were between 4.4 and 5.0, whereas nonnative speaker scores averaged between 3.6 and 4.7. Figure 4 illustrates the differences in the mean scores assigned to the two groups.

The descriptive statistics indicate that NS messages were on average perceived to be more clear ($M=4.9$, $SD=0.2$), more socially appropriate ($M=4.5$, $SD=0.5$), and more polite ($M=4.6$, $SD=0.5$) whereas perceptions of the NNS messages were on average less clear ($M=4.2$, $SD=0.6$), less socially appropriate ($M=3.6$, $SD=0.5$), and less polite ($M=3.9$, $SD=0.6$).

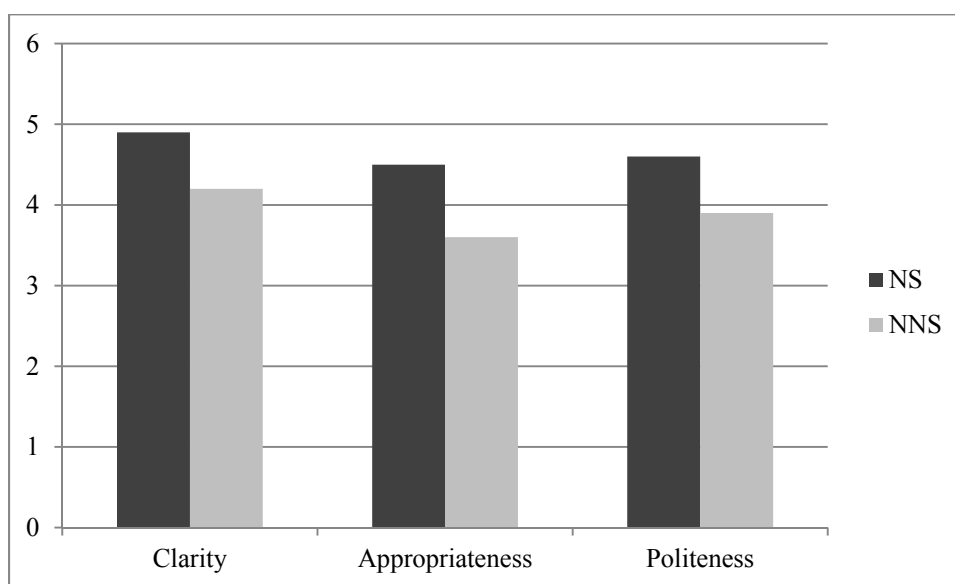
Analysis of variance

The data from all four scenarios were submitted to three one-way between subject ANOVAs, one for each of the three dependent variables (rating on clarity, appropriateness, and politeness) and the native language (native vs. nonnative Russian) as the independent variable. The analysis revealed a significant difference between groups in regard to clarity, $F(1,162)=128.923$, $p\leq.001$, partial eta squared=.443; the social appropriateness of the message, $F(1,162)=124.254$, $p\leq.001$, partial eta squared=.434; and politeness $F(1,162)=62.959$, $p\leq.001$, partial eta squared=.288. These findings answer the first research question: native and nonnative messages are perceived differently by native speakers of Russian. Figure 5 provides a visual representation of the significant difference between ratings given to NS-like messages and NNS-like messages.

Main effect was found across all four scenarios, as well as within individual scenarios. In scenario one, the analysis revealed a significant difference between groups

Table 6: NNS ratings: mean scores and standard deviations

Scenario	Comprehensibility		Appropriateness		Politeness	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	3.9	0.6	3.6	0.6	3.8	0.7
2	4.1	0.6	3.7	0.5	4.1	0.4
3	4.1	0.6	3.6	0.5	3.8	0.5
4	4.5	0.5	3.7	0.1	4.7	0.1

**Figure 4:** Comparison of average NS and NNS scores

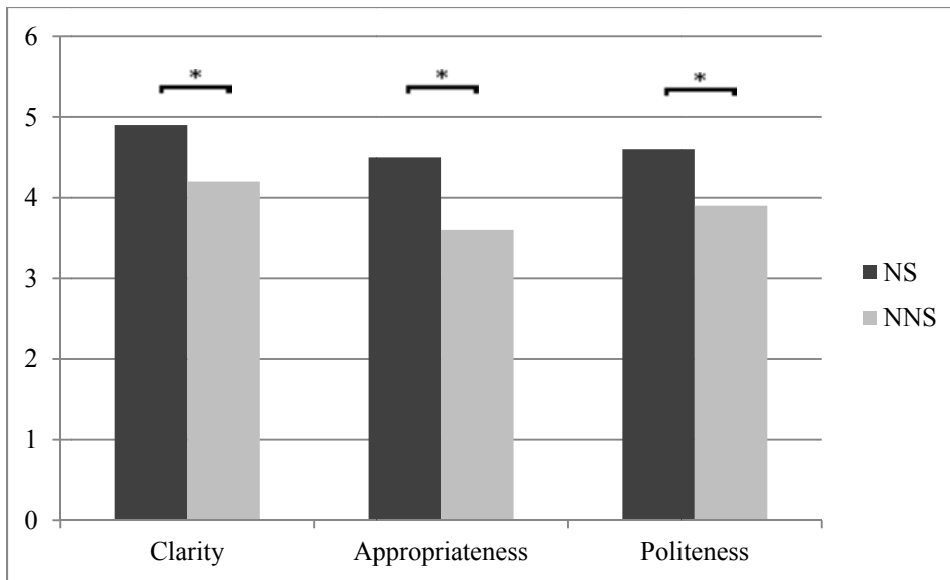


Figure 5: Ratings of native vs. nonnative messages

in regard to clarity, $F(1,39)=40.827$, $p \leq .001$, partial eta squared=.511, the social appropriateness of the message, $F(1,39)=27.372$, $p \leq .001$, partial eta squared=.412, and politeness $F(1,39)=12.659$, $p \leq .001$, partial eta squared=.245. In scenario two, NS scores were significantly higher for clarity, $F(1,39)=52.805$, $p \leq .001$, partial eta squared=.114, the social appropriateness of the message, $F(1,39)=15.012$, $p \leq .001$, partial eta squared=.575, and politeness $F(1,39)=5.023$, $p \leq .003$, partial eta squared=.277. Similarly, in scenario three there was a significant difference between the groups on all three measures: clarity, $F(1,39)=37.182$, $p \leq .001$, partial eta squared=.488, the social appropriateness of the message, $F(1,39)=53.422$, $p \leq .001$, partial eta squared=.578, and politeness $F(1,39)=38.623$, $p \leq .001$, partial eta squared=.497. The differences were also significant in scenario four (clarity, $F(1,39)=16.498$, $p \leq .001$, partial eta squared=.297, the social appropriateness of the message, $F(1,39)=43.963$, $p < .001$, partial eta squared=.529 and politeness $F(1,39)=21.010$, $p < .001$, partial eta squared=.351).

Analysis of strategies

Following the quantitative analysis of the raters' mean scores, the strategies used native and nonnative messages were analyzed. The purpose of this analysis was to reveal differences in the requestive strategies, supportive moves, and internal and external modifications chosen by the two groups of participants. Interesting patterns emerged, and they are discussed in the sections below. Examples 15 and 16 illustrate native responses to scenarios 1 and 2, and examples 17 and 18 illustrate nonnative responses to the same scenarios (in English translation). All names are fictitious.

Example 15:

Respected Ludmila Petrovna,

My name is X. This year, I graduated from high school with honors and I am intending to enter the faculty of Russian literature at the University of Saint Petersburg. You couldn't provide me with information about the program of study? Couldn't you also tell me what my chances of being accepted are? In high school, I majored in literature.

With respect,

X

Example 16:

Good morning, respected Andrey Sergeevitch,

I was a student in section 5 of your Russian history class. My final grade in your class was an A. Couldn't you write a letter of recommendation for a scholarship for me? I would be very grateful for your support.

With respect,

Y

As will be seen from the detailed analysis below, these two examples of native speaker messages reveal some interesting features, such as the selected forms of address ('Respected...'), negative questions in the nucleus of the requests, fairly detailed background information about the student, and the closings ('With respect'). Nonnative choices were often different, as the examples below illustrate.

Example 17:

Dear Gavrilova Ludmila Petrovna,

My name is X, and I am writing to you because I am interested in studying at the Saint Petersburg University. I would like to obtain information about the program of study for Russian literature majors, and also to find out what my chances are to get accepted. If you could send me this information, I would be very happy.

Thank you for your time,

X

Example 18:

Professor Dvornitchenko,

I have a big favor to ask. I hope that you remember me. My name is Y. I recently took one of your history classes at the Moscow State University. I am deeply grateful to you and the other professors for what you have taught me. I want to apply for a scholarship that would allow me to continue my history studies. If you could write me a letter of recommendation, I would be very grateful and happy.

Thank you for your consideration,

Y

That these responses are different from native speaker responses is immediately apparent. For example, the salutations, the forms of address, and the closings are unlike the native speaker equivalents, as are the head acts. Whereas native speakers selected negative statements in their head acts, nonnative speakers employed modals and conditionals. While the purpose of providing Examples 15-18 was to illustrate native and nonnative responses to the DTC, the detailed strategy analysis of the whole corpus collected for this study revealed interesting patterns that may provide at least a partial explanation of the significant differences in the ratings.

Head act

The head act is the part of the request that realizes the act independently of the other elements such as alerters, supportive moves, upgraders and downgraders. In the present study, three kinds of head act realizations were found: direct, conventionally indirect, and nonconventionally indirect. Within direct strategies, the following types were identified: mood derivable (imperatives), explicit performatives, hedged performatives, and want statements. Conventionally indirect strategies were divided into query preparatory (questions), preparatory negative, preparatory positive, and preparatory conditionals. The only nonconventionally indirect strategy employed by both groups was strong hints. Some subjects formulated more than one head request (e.g., on request regarding information about the program of study and a separate one regarding the student's chances of being accepted into the program). Table 7 shows the number of the different types of requests produced by both groups of subjects.

Table 7: Types of requests produced by NS and NNS

Strategy Type	NS	NNS
Direct		
Mood derivable	6	5
Explicit performatives	19	6
Hedged performatives	8	6
Want statements	11	42
Conventionally indirect		
Query preparatory	2	5
Preparatory negative	35	11
Preparatory positive	2	12
Preparatory conditional	4	11
Nonconventionally indirect		
Strong hints	1	1

In contrast to previous findings (e.g., Mills, 1993; Ogiermann, 2003), neither Russian nor American participants showed a strong preference for conventionally indirect strategies. Interestingly, a comparison with the control data collected for the present study revealed that conventionally indirect strategies were preferred by native speakers of English when writing messages in English (86%), whereas native speakers of English writing requests in Russian chose this type of directness in only 39% of their requests. No direct strategies were found in the control data as compared to 60% in the NNS data. The employment of nonconventionally indirect strategies (i.e., hints) was extremely low overall – at 1% for both NS and NNS, and at 2% in the control data. Figure 6 represents the distribution of the three levels of directness in the NS and NNS corpus in percentages.

Within the direct strategies, the following categories were distinguished: mood derivable (imperatives), e.g., ‘podskažite, požaluysta’ (‘indicate, please’); explicit performatives, or utterances with explicitly marked illocutionary force, e.g.,

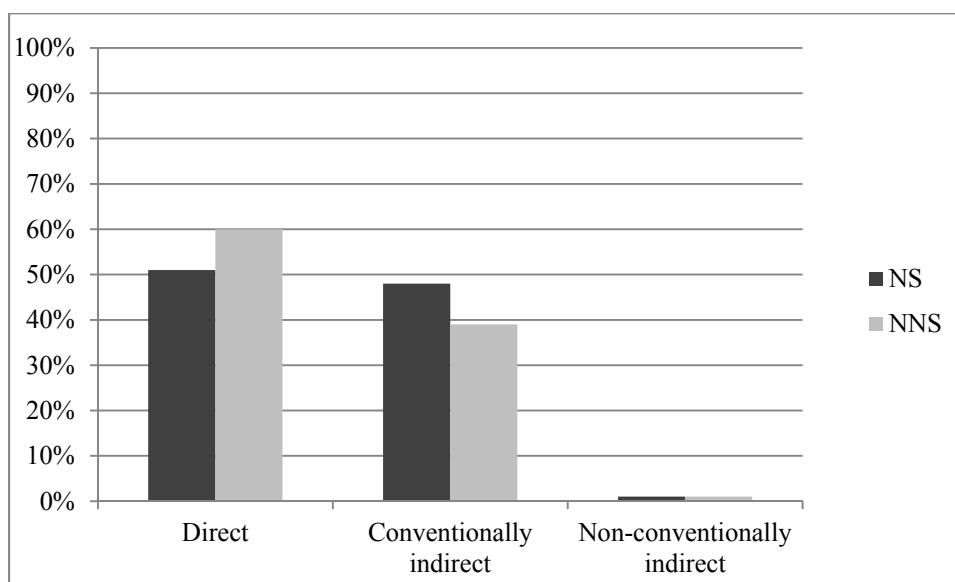


Figure 6: Distribution of levels of directness

obraščajus k vam s prosboj' ('I am turning to you with a request'); hedged performatives, where the verb expressing the request is modified by a modal or verbs expressing intention, e.g., 'ja xotel by obratitsja k vam s prosboj' ('I would like to turn to you with a request'); and want statements, or the utterances expressing the speaker's desire that the request be granted, e.g., 'ja xotela by uznat'' ('I would like to know'). Figure 7 illustrates the distribution of these types of direct strategies among the two groups of informants.

As it can be seen, want statements were particularly common in the NNS data, at 43% of all strategies used by this group. Native speakers of Russian, on the other hand, showed a relatively strong preference for explicit performatives, at 22% of all strategies. Contrary to previous findings (e.g., Ogiermann, 2003, where imperatives made up 35% of the Russian requests), imperatives were not very common among the native speakers of Russian (7%).

The conventionally indirect strategies identified in the data include four types of preparatory utterances, i.e., conventionalized utterances that contain references to ability, willingness, or possibility. The four types were: query preparatory (interrogatives); negative preparatory utterances (e.g., 'ne mogli by vy' 'couldn't you'); positive preparatory utterances (e.g., 'mogli by vy' 'could you'); and conditional preparatory statements (e.g., 'esli vy smožete' 'if you could'). Figure 8 summarizes the findings.

By far, the preferred conventionally indirect strategy in the NS data was negative preparatory (40% of all requests), in comparison with only 11% of all NNS requests. The negative preparatory strategy is the most common requestive strategy used by the NS group in this study. A reverse trend can be observed in the case of positive preparatory strategies. While this strategy was used by only 2% of native speakers, and only in

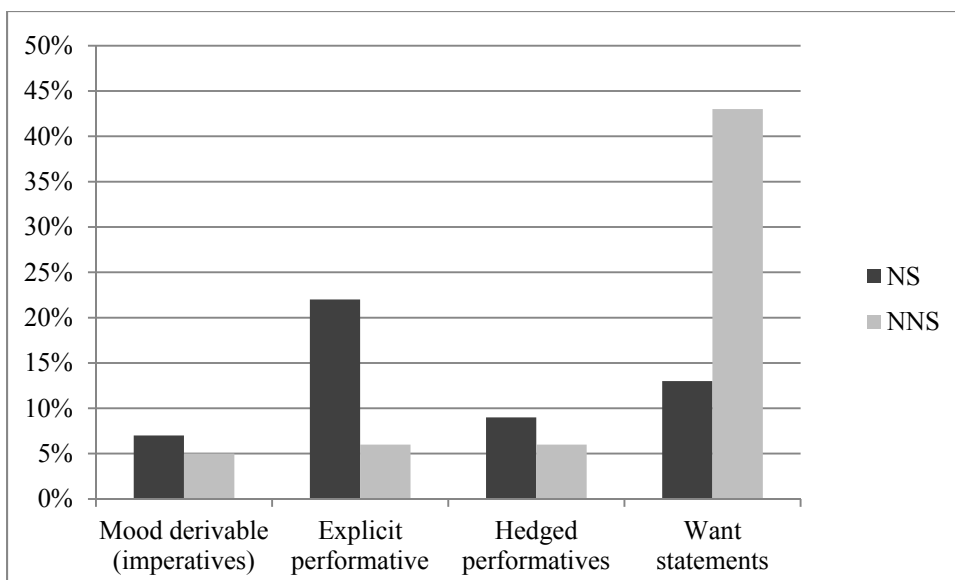


Figure 7: Direct strategies used by NS and NNS

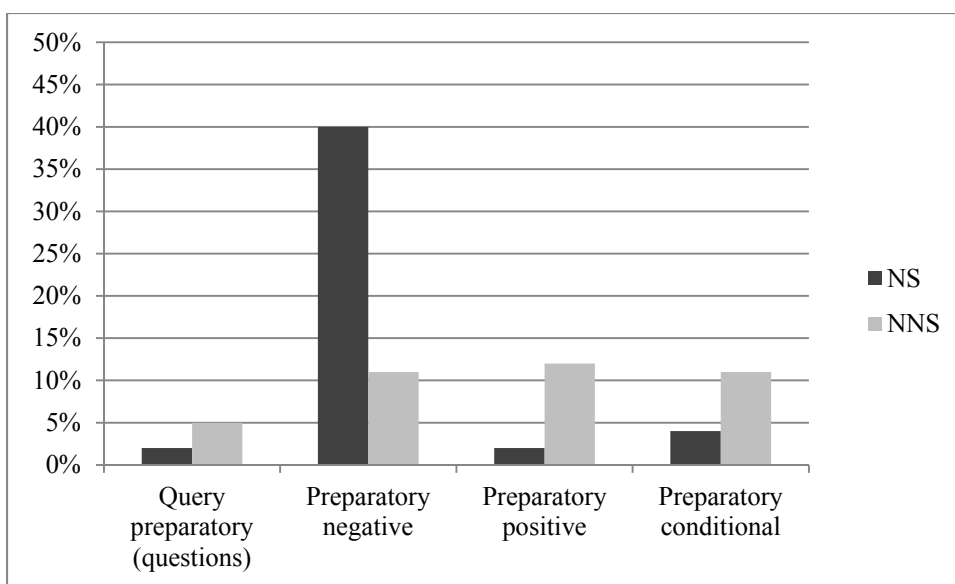


Figure 8: Conventionally indirect strategies used by NS and NNS

impersonal constructions, it was employed by nonnative speakers in 12% of their requests, and only in 5 out of these 12 requests an impersonal construction is used. Ogiermann (2003) notes that the negative particle in preparatory requests in Russian actually functions as a syntactic downgrader without which the construction can be interpreted as a genuine question of ability (p. 199). Overall, it seems that nonnative speakers were attempting to employ negative preparatory requests, yet often omitted the negative particle, which resulted in positive preparatory requests, a strategy rarely utilized by native speakers.

Nonconventionally indirect requests were almost absent from the data, at 1% for each group. This is consistent with earlier findings (e.g., Mills, 1993).

External modifications

In addition to the head act, external modifications were analyzed as a part of the strategy analysis. The analysis focused on downgraders, upgraders, alerters and supportive moves. Downgraders are defined as linguistic means whose employment is supposed to decrease the impact of a request. The most common downgraders found in the data in the present study were conditional clauses (e.g., ‘I would be very grateful if you could do this for me’) and the lexical downgrader ‘požalujsta’ (please), which typically occurred with imperative constructions. Downgraders were found in 36% of NS messages, and in 43% of NNS messages. Figure 9 shows the distribution of the two types of the most common downgraders among the two groups. Figure 10 compares the use of upgraders by native and nonnative speakers.

In contrast to downgraders, upgraders actually increase the impact of a request. Upgraders were not common in the NS messages (6%) as opposed to NNS messages (19%). They included intensifiers such as ‘očen’ trudno’ (‘very difficult’) and time intensifiers such as ‘kak možno skoree’ (‘as soon as possible’), ‘ešče raz’ (‘one more time’) and ‘ne pozdnee vtornika’ (‘no later than Tuesday’).

Alerters

Alerters in the present study include the following categories: names, personal pronouns, salutations, and closings. The forms of address (names) selected by native and nonnative speakers in the present study displayed interesting differences. First, the categories used by native speakers included ‘first name + patronymic’ and ‘first name + patronymic + last name.’ Nonnative speakers, in addition to these two categories, also used ‘last name’ and ‘first name’; when these were employed, they were always preceded by the title (‘professor’). Figures 11 and 12 show the distribution of the forms of address for both groups.

As can be seen from Figure 11, native speakers of Russian showed a strong preference for the use of the first name followed by the patronymic when addressing professors (93%), and they always used a salutation. The second choice (7%) was the addressee’s full name.

As Figure 12 shows, nonnative speakers used more diversified salutations. While the first name followed by the patronymic was also the most commonly used category, it has to be noted that it was used by NNS in only 43% of the messages, compared with 93% of NS messages. These results are visualized in Figure 13.

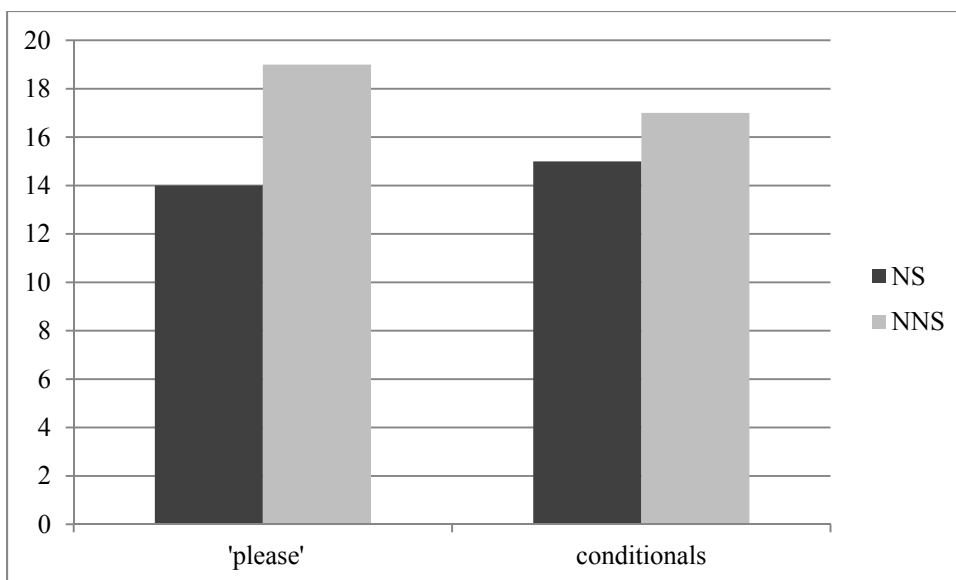


Figure 9: The most common downgraders used by NS and NNS

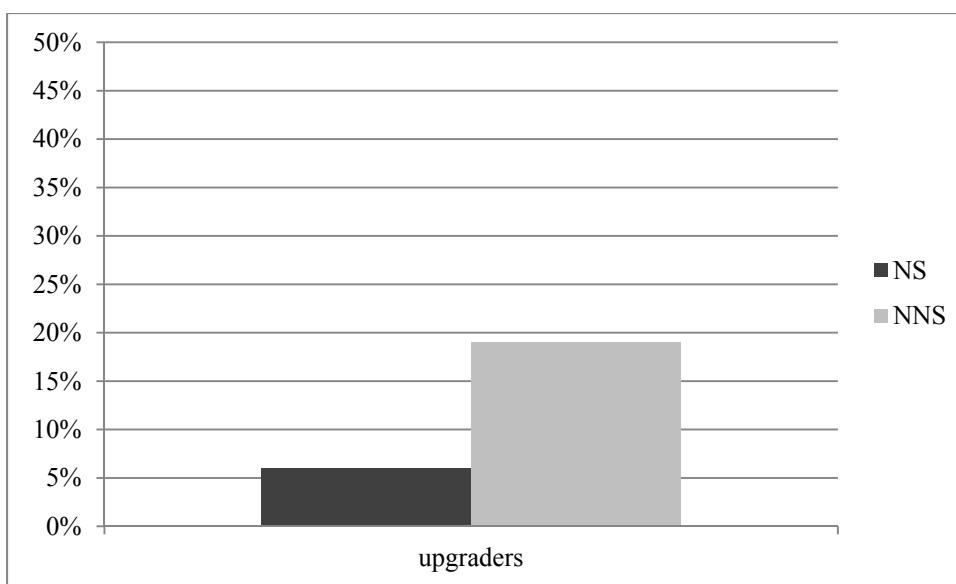


Figure 10: The use of upgraders by NS and NNS

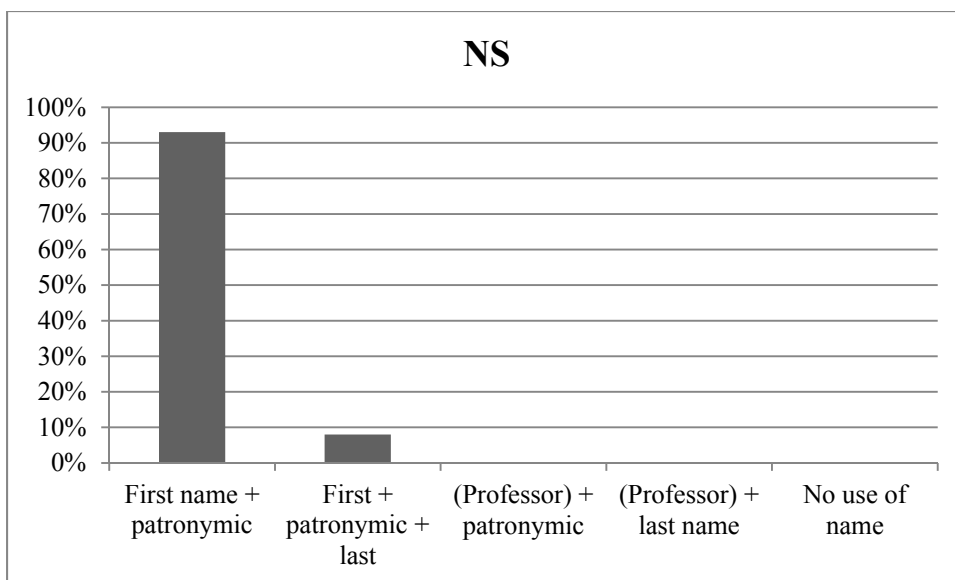


Figure 11: Forms of address (names) used by NS

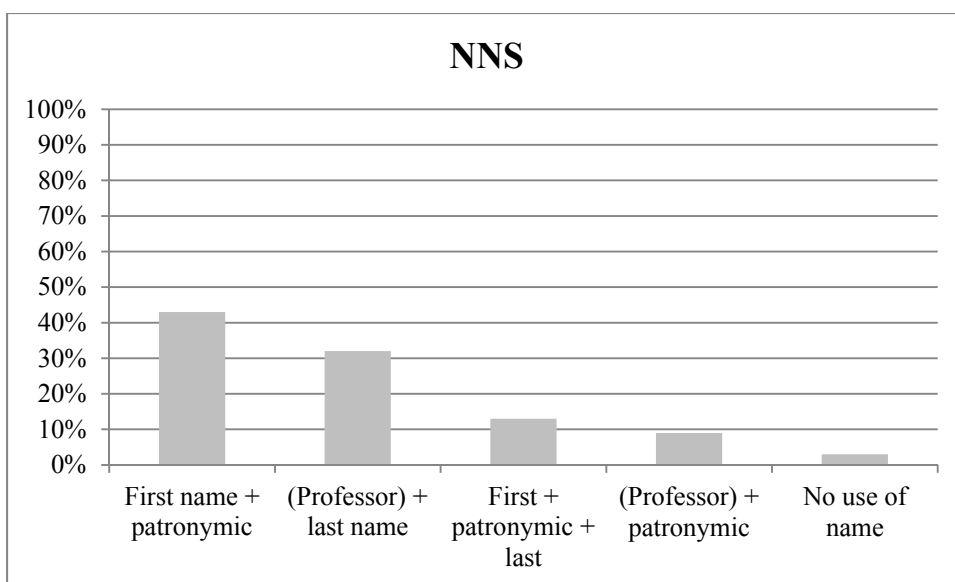


Figure 12: Forms of address (names) used by NNS

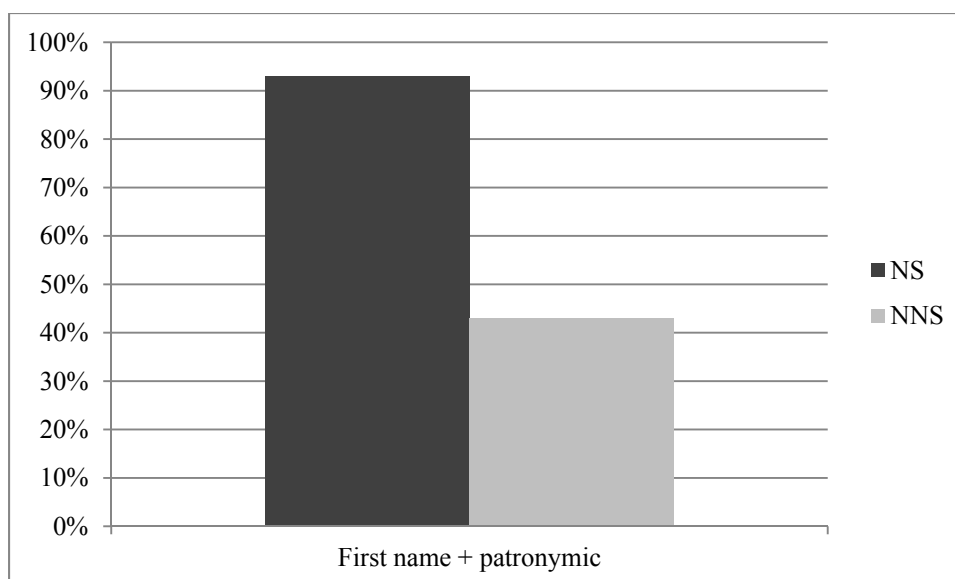


Figure 13: The use of patronymics in NS and NNS messages

Native and nonnative speakers also differed in their use of salutations. As in the case of names, the NNS choices were more diverse than NS choices; thus, NNS used certain salutations not found in the NS data. Figures 14 and 15 show the differences between the two groups.

The majority of NS (40%) used ‘respected’ (‘uvažaemyj/uvažаемaja’), followed by ‘hello’ (‘zdravstvujte’) (25%). Another major preference was ‘good day’ (‘dobryj den’) and the combinations of ‘good day’ and ‘hello’ with ‘good day’ (both at 7.5%).

In contrast to the NS, NNS showed the strongest preference for addressing the recipient as ‘professor,’ a category that is nearly nonexistent in the native speaker data (the title ‘professor’ is only used once and only in combination with ‘good day’). Overall, 64.5% of emails written by American informants used this form of address alone or in combination with another salutation, as compared to 1% of Russian participants.

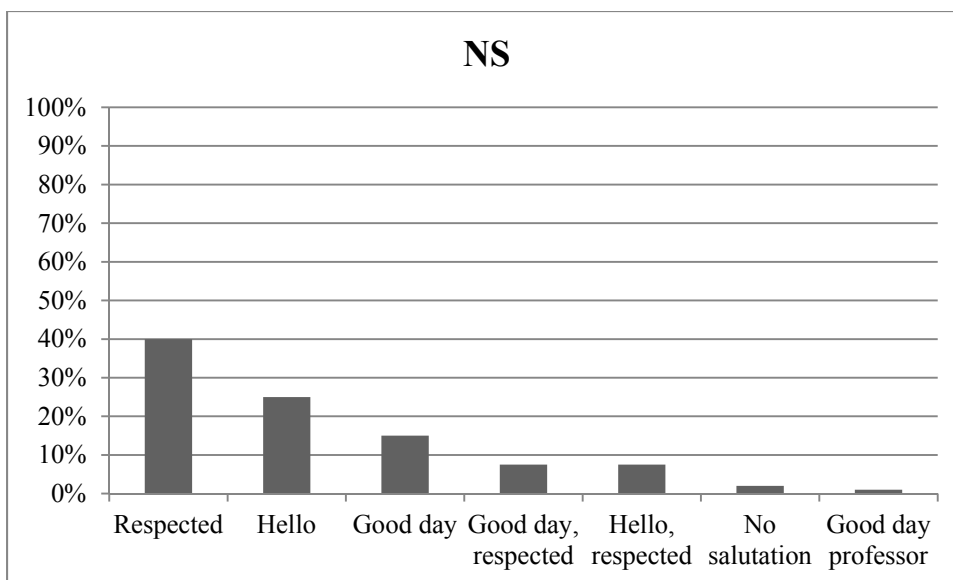


Figure 14: Salutations used by NNS

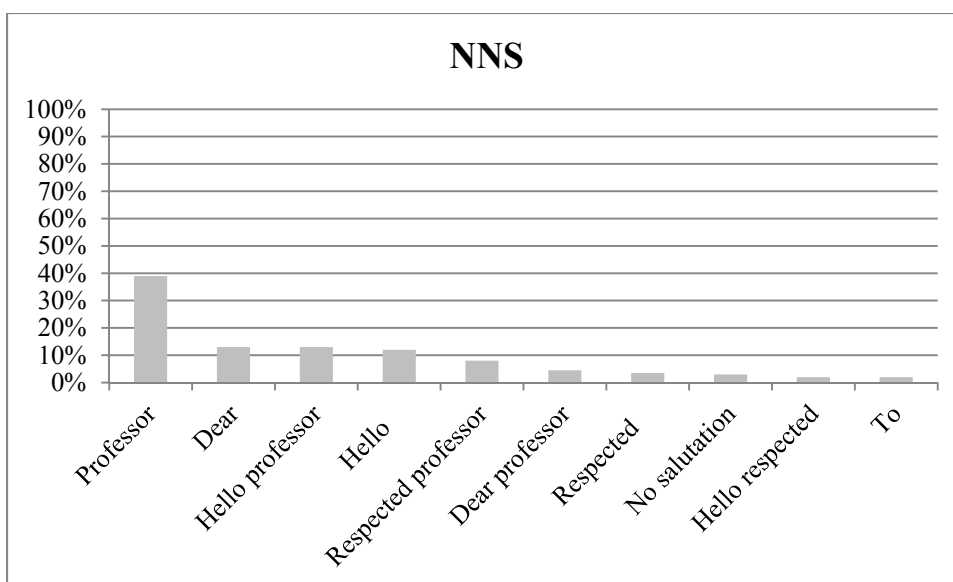


Figure 15: Salutations used by NNS

On the other hand, ‘respected,’ which was present in 52% of the NS emails, was only used by 13% of American respondents. Another difference to point out is the use of ‘dear’ and ‘dear professor’ in the NNS data, which account for 17.5% of all NNS messages. NS did not use this form of address at all.

The closings used by both groups were much more varied than salutations, and distinct categories were not immediately obvious. Seventeen different expressions were distinguished among the closings used by nonnative speakers, and 13 among native speakers. Table 7 contains all different closings identified in the data with the number of instances found in each group of subjects. Russian glosses are provided for the common formulaic expressions, whereas only English equivalents are provided for more complex, original combinations. It also must be noted that some messages contained a combination of two different categories.

What is interesting about these data is that in 11 of the 16 cases, nonnative speakers used closings that were never used by the native-speakers. The most common of these (7 cases) was ‘Thank you for everything.’ On the other hand, ‘Thankful in advance,’ an expression common in the native speaker data, was underrepresented in nonnative messages. Another intriguing observation is that the most common closing used by native speakers of Russian was ‘with respect’ (‘s uvaženiem’) (53 instances). This expression was also used by nonnative speakers, but only in 15 instances. Figure 16 illustrates these results.

A more careful analysis of both sets of data revealed that ‘with respect’ was very often used in combination with another phrase (e.g., ‘Zaranee blagodarju. S uvaženiem,’ or expressing thankfulness for time/help).

Twenty-nine combinations of ‘respected’ with another phrase were found in native Russian messages, and 10 in American messages. Figure 17 compares the number of occurrences of ‘s uvaženiem’ (‘with respect’) standing alone and in combination with another closing expression. Personal pronouns are another sub-category of alerters. Both groups of participants employed the formal second person pronoun ‘vy’ rather than the informal pronoun ‘ty.’ However, while 90% of the NNS informants correctly capitalized it, 86% of NS informants used the lower case. Figure 18 illustrates these results.

Another interesting fact about pronouns observed in the data is the use of inclusive first person plural pronoun ‘my’ (‘we’). It was found in 11% of the NNS head acts in expressions such as ‘Could we discuss...’ or ‘Could we meet...’ Similar constructions were found in less than 3% of NS messages.

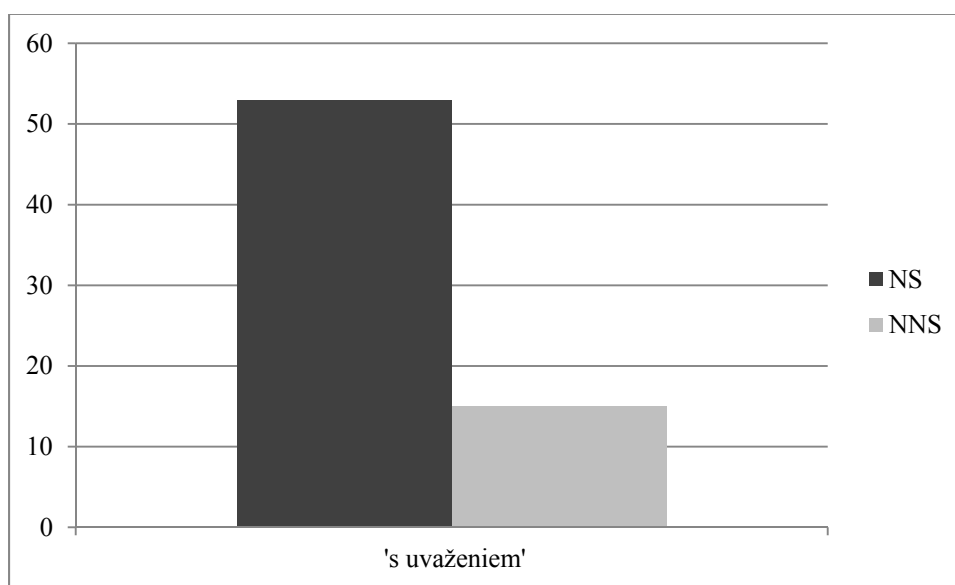


Figure 16: The use of ‘s uvaženiem’ (‘with respect’)

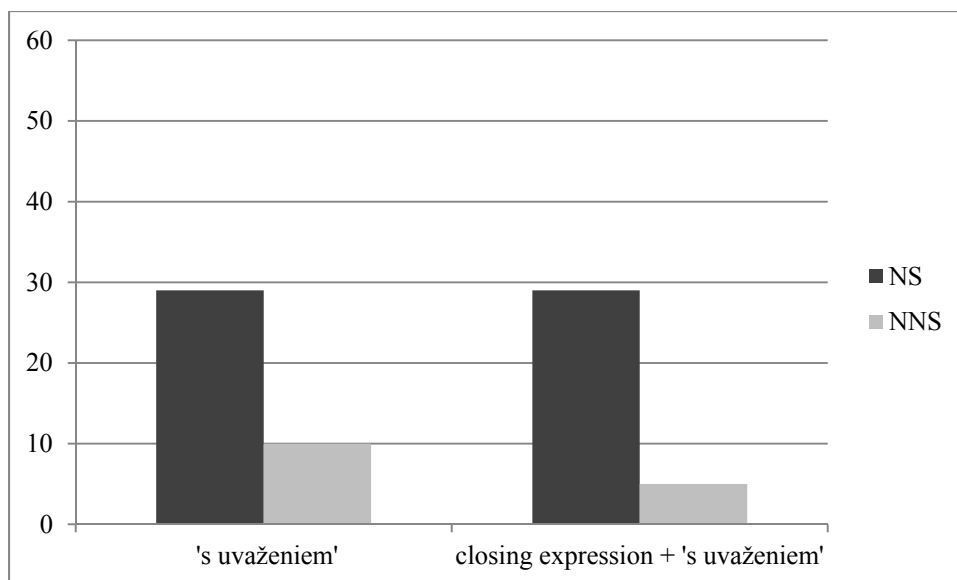


Figure 17: The use of 's uvažniem' ('with respect') standing along and with other closing expressions

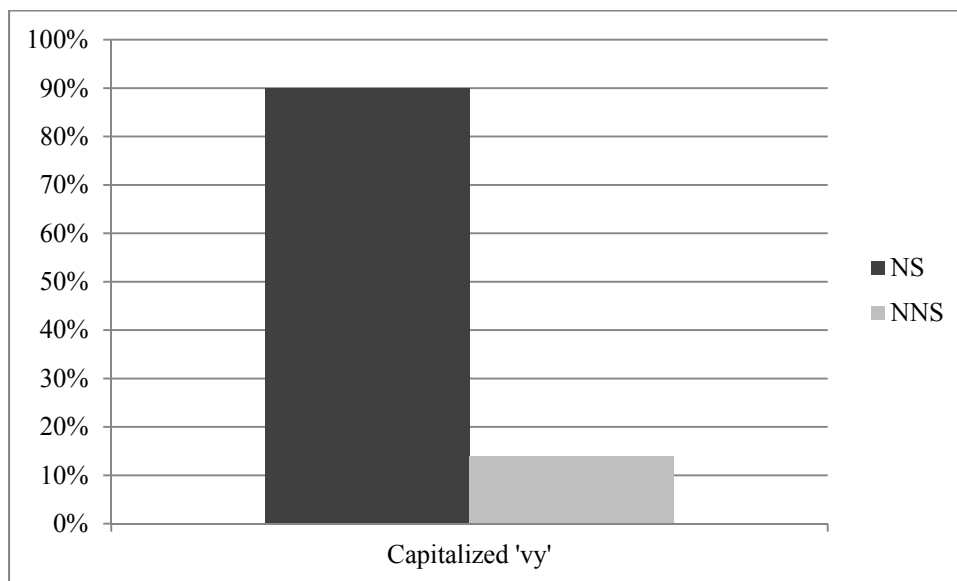


Figure 18: Capitalization of 'vy' ('you') by NS and NNS

Supportive moves

The last category of external modifications distinguished for the purpose of the present study is supportive moves. These include preparators (e.g., ‘I’d like to ask you...’; permission to make a request), imposition minimizers (e.g., ‘but only if you have time’), disarmers (modifications that remove any potential objections), and grounders (i.e., reasons and explanations). Interestingly, both groups of participants used similar supportive moves in their requests, and they appeared in the majority of the messages.

Ninety-two percent of native messages and 93% of nonnative messages contained supportive moves. The paragraphs below provide a detailed discussion of the types of supportive moves found in the data collected for the present study. Because the grounders used differ depending on the scenario, it makes sense to discuss them individually rather than make generalizations. The discussion of preparators, imposition minimizers and disarmers will not be broken down by scenario.

The preparators used in the data can be divided into those that provide general information about the context of the request (e.g., ‘I am your former student,’ ‘I hope you remember me,’ or ‘I have just graduated from your program’), and those that provide more detailed information about the writer of the message (e.g., ‘My name is X and I am a student in your Russian literature class’ or ‘I am a student from group No. 5’). Two openings, one used by a native speaker and one used by a nonnative speaker, are phatic in nature – the authors express a hope that the recipients had a nice semester break. Figure 19 shows the distribution of these three categories of preparators in NS and NNS data. As can be seen, an explanation of the general context for the request was provided by almost a half of participants in both groups. However, Russian participants were more

likely to provide more detailed information about themselves. In fact, 51% of the NS messages contained names, detailed course information or group number, as compared to only 16% NNS messages. This finding is not consistent with Ogiermann (2003) whose Russian subjects rarely justified their requests. However, they were more likely to assure the hearer that the imposition of the request would be minimal. Not unlikely, this inconsistency resulted from the difference between the data collected in Ogiermann's study (spoken) and the present study (written).

The use of grounders varied depending on the scenario. Recall that in the first scenario, the participants were requesting information about a graduate program in Russian literature and the chances of getting accepted. In the second scenario, they were asking for a letter of recommendation for a scholarship application. In the third one, they were requesting an appointment to discuss questions about the class, and in the last one, they wanted to meet with the professor to talk about their final paper. The

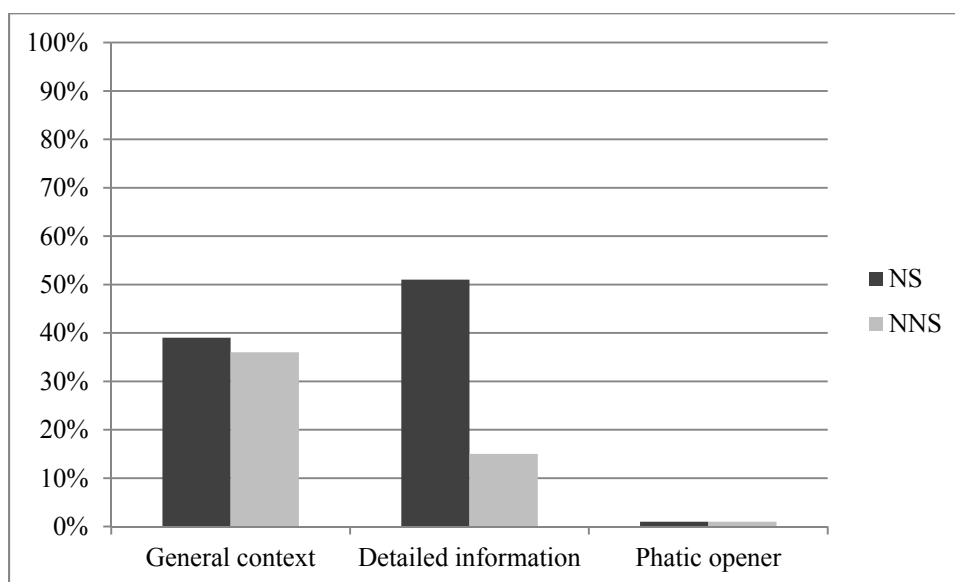


Figure 19: Preparators

grounders used by the two groups of participants in each of the scenarios are summarized in Table 8.

As the table shows, the most common justification for the request in the first scenario was the desire to enter university or continue education. In the second scenario, the need to obtain the scholarship was the most frequently provided reason. In scenarios three and four, the majority of the participants justified their request with a need to discuss some questions. Overall, 80% of NS messages, and 74% of NNS messages contained reasons, explanations or justifications for the request.

In addition to preparators and grounders, the messages contained disarmers and imposition minimizers. Disarmers are defined as expressions used to remove any

Table 8: Closings used by NS and NNS

Closing	NS	NNS
With respect ('s uvaženiem')	53	15
Thankful in advance ('zaranee blagodarju')	16	1
Thanks in advance ('zaranee spasibo')	14	7
With the best wishes ('z nailuščemi poželanijami')	4	1
Many thanks ('bolšoe spasibo,' 'ogromnoe spasibo')	6	26
Thank you for your help ('spasibo za vašu pomošč')	1	15
Thank you for your time ('spasibo za vaše vremja')	1	7
Thank you for your time and help	0	1
Thank you for everything ('spasibo za vsjo')	0	7
I am waiting for your (prompt) response / I hope for a quick response	4	3
Thank you for your response	1	0
I am thankful for your support	1	1
Thank you for your consideration	0	1
With thanks and hope for a prompt response	1	1
Grateful in advance ('zaranje priznatelnij')	1	0
All the best ('vsevo dobrovo')	0	1
Good day	0	2
No closing	3	9

potential objections to the request (Blum-Kulka, et al. 1989, p. 287). In the present study, the participants used disarmers such as statements about their good academic standing (good grades, high GPA, high test scores) or their interest in and thankfulness for the course; compliments on professors' accomplishments, credentials and knowledge; acknowledgment of the university's ranking; references to problems or difficulties with the course. Of the messages written by native speakers of Russian, 34% contained disarmers, as compared to 25% of the messages written by nonnative speakers. Table 9 summarizes the use of disarmers by the two groups of participants.

The last type of mitigating supportive moves, imposition minimizers, includes expressions that are supposed to reduce the level of imposition on the recipient of the message (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 287). In the present study, all imposition minimizers made a reference to using a professor's time, e.g., 'I understand that you are very busy,' or 'What is the best time for you?' In the NS data, 31% of the requests were mitigated with an imposition minimizer, in comparison with 24% of the NNS requests.

It is interesting to observe that references to time found in the present study actually fall into two very different categories of request modifications, namely imposition minimizers on one hand (e.g., 'I understand you are busy'), and upgraders on the other (e.g., 'I am available on Monday after class,' or 'I am waiting for your response'). It could be speculated that while some participants seemed to show their respect in recognizing the value of their addressees' time, those who used references to time as upgraders seemed to value their own time more. Three out of five NNS upgraders, and eight out of 16 NNS upgraders made references to time (e.g., 'I need your response by next Tuesday,' 'I am free on Mondays after class'). Figure 21 compares the

use of time expressions aiming to minimize the imposition of the request with those that increase the impact of the request.

Follow-up interviews

After the email and rater data were collected and analyzed, a number of participants were contacted and invited to participate in a follow-up interview. Six participants attended these sessions. Because these discussions were not meant to be comprehensive, the results are not quantifiable. The findings are incorporated in the discussion in Chapter 5.

Table 9: Grounders used in scenarios 1-4

Scenario	Grounder category	NS	NNS
1	Desire to enter university or continue education	13	10
	Interest in Russian literature	2	3
	Reference to the university website	1	0
2	Reference to the scholarship	16	13
	Desire to pursue a (graduate) degree	5	9
3	Need to discuss a question	8	15
	Complaint about the difficulty of the course	2	0
	Reference to professor's invitation to take advantage of office hours	1	0
4	References to the paper	7	1
	Need to discuss some questions	9	11

Table 10: Types of disarmers used by NS and NNS

Disarmer	NS	NNS
Good academic standing	4	3
Interest in the course	6	3
Thankfulness for the course	6	1
Complimenting the professor	4	5
Acknowledgement of university's ranking	4	0
References to problems or difficulties	3	9

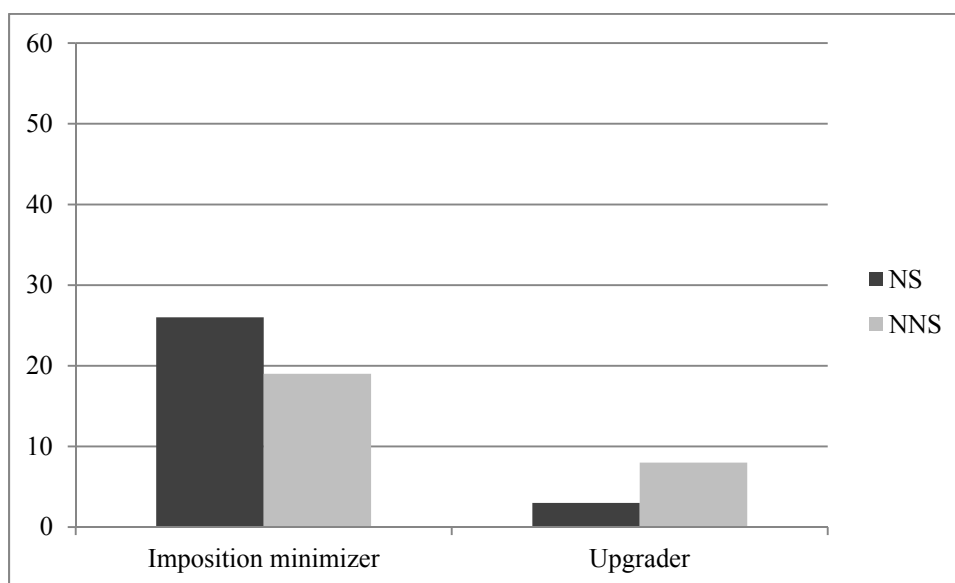


Figure 20: Distribution of references to time

Conclusion

The results of the analysis of the rater scores show that native-speaker raters evaluate messages written by native speakers as clearer, more socially appropriate, and more polite than those written by nonnative speakers. The results were highly significant on all three measures, and for all four scenarios. A detailed strategy analysis revealed that the requests written by the two groups of participants differed in regards to head act strategies, alerters, downgraders, upgraders and supportive moves. While the use of some of the NNS strategies approximates that of the NS, differences were found on several dimensions, including the use of positive preparatory strategies (conventionally indirect requests), want statements (direct requests) and forms of address (alerters). While differences in the use of upgraders, downgraders, and direct versus indirect strategies were not large, overall, the findings of the present study confirm the hypothesis that even

advanced learners of a language may not have fully developed certain aspects of sociolinguistic competence. A discussion of the results follows in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Chapter overview

This chapter summarizes the findings of the present study, discusses the findings in the light of former research, acknowledges the study's limitations, points out directions for further research and states pedagogical implications of the study. Most importantly, the results of the present study shed light on the attainment of communicative competence and the role of pragmalinguistic failure and pragmatic transfer in a second language. The chapter also discusses the limitations of the present study, namely the data collection method used in the study (DCT), the scope of the study (requests in email), and the characteristics of the nonnative participants. Finally, pedagogical implications and suggestions for further research are stated. The chapter concludes that while teaching pragmatics should be incorporated in second language curricula, more research in the field of second language pragmatics is needed.

Summary of findings

Emerging from the tradition of interlanguage pragmatics studies, the present study sought to answer the question: are messages written by native and nonnative speakers of Russian are perceived as different by native Russians. The results of the statistical

analysis indicate that this is indeed the case. Nonnative speaker messages were perceived to be less clear, less socially appropriate and less polite than native-speaker messages, and the differences between the groups were statistically significant. These findings are consistent with Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) and Hacking (2008).

In addition, the goal of the present study was to identify the features in native and nonnative emails that could provide an explanation for these differences in perception. A detailed analysis of head acts, as well as internal and external modifications of requests was conducted. It was determined that the NS and NNS use of direct and indirect strategies did not differ to a great extent, and the use of nonconventionally indirect requests was marginal. These findings are not consistent with the findings of Ogiermann (2009), who concluded that native speakers preferred direct strategies, and nonnative speakers preferred interrogatives, and of Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth (2002), and Lee (2004) who postulated that NNS were more direct. Perhaps the NNS in the present study were more advanced learners, although the differences may also be attributed to the difference in elicitation methods and scenarios.

The direct strategies revealed interesting differences. Both groups used a large repertoire of different strategies, which is not consistent with Kasanga (2006), who found that the NNS repertoire was less varied. However, the NS showed a strong preference for explicit performatives, while the NNS group preferred want statements. Differences were also found within conventionally indirect strategies. The most common strategy in NS messages was preparatory negative, while in NNS messages it was preparatory positive.

Moreover, intriguing similarities and differences were found in internal and external modifications of requests. The use of downgraders by the two groups of

participants was similar – both groups mainly utilized conditionals and the lexical downgrader ‘please.’ However, the NNS group used upgraders more often than did the NS group.

The analysis of external modifications focused on alerters, closings, personal pronouns, and supportive moves. First, both native and nonnative speakers typically addressed professors by the first name and patronymic. However, this form of address was preceded by the salutation ‘respected’ in native speaker messages, whereas nonnative speakers mostly used ‘professor.’ Overall, NS and NNS in the present study employed different forms of address, a finding that confirms Dong’s results (2010). As far as closings are concerned, ‘with respect’ was the most frequent choice among NS, while NNS preferred ‘many thanks’ and used some closings that never occurred in the NS data. In addition, NNS almost never capitalized the second person singular pronoun ‘vy,’ whereas NS almost exclusively did. Finally, regarding supportive moves, both groups used them with a similar frequency, and they showed similarities in the types of grounders, disarmers and imposition minimizers they selected. Preparators, however, were more detailed in NS than NNS messages.

Sociolinguistic competence

Recall that sociolinguistic competence or knowledge is defined as the component of linguistic knowledge which allows language users to consider the status differences between the interlocutors, the context of the interchange, and the level of the imposition of the request in selecting linguistic means to convey the message (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Swain & Canale, 1980). Thus, sociolinguistic competence (which entails

knowledge of sociocultural rules and discourse rules) is reflected in perception and production of utterances that are appropriate in a given context (Swain & Canale, 1980) and in the ability to use and understand different registers (Bachman & Palmer, 2010). The present study investigated certain aspects of the participants' sociolinguistic competence by examining their ability to formulate requests via email to a fictitious Russian professor. More specifically, using Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell's (1995) terms, this study focused on actional competence (i.e., the ability to express communicative intent, use conventionalized forms and formulaic expressions, and formulate direct and indirect speech acts) and discourse competence (i.e., selecting, sequencing and arrangement of words, structures, and sentences, the use of openings and closings, cohesion, coherence, use of genres and deixis).

Several similarities between NS and NNS in the formulation of the requests in the present study suggest that the NNS participants did evaluate the status and the context correctly. For example, they correctly employed the polite version of the second person singular pronoun; they used respectful forms of address; and they mitigated their requests with supportive moves similar to those employed by the NNS. Nevertheless, the NNS messages were rated to be less socially appropriate and less polite than the NS messages. This suggests that the learners' sociolinguistic competence in Russian is not completely developed, and that the area of difficulty lies not in sociopragmatics (i.e., failure to perform the speech act required by the situation), but in pragmalinguistics. Nevertheless, the task the nonnative speakers faced was very challenging since, to quote Kasper and Rose (2002), "what counts as sociopragmatically appropriate is guided by social, cultural and personal preferences and the dynamics of the ongoing interaction." (p.262).

Therefore, establishing the native-speaker sociopragmatic norm is not as straightforward as stating grammatical rules. Considering the degree of variation in native speaker data, and the fact that nonnative speaker pragmatic mistakes are typically judged more severely than native speaker violations of conversational maxims, the level of sociolinguistic competence developed by the participants in the present study is rather impressive.

Pragmalinguistic failure

Pragmalinguistic failure occurs when a language learner performs a speech act required by the situation using inappropriate linguistic means (Thomas, 1983, p. 99). Several examples of pragmalinguistic failure were observed in the nonnative data in the present study. Mills (1993) distinguished the following categories of pragmalinguistic failure in her study of Russian requests:

- More verbosity – preparators, pre-requests, grounders; a greater inclination to provide a rationale for making a request
- Avoidance of the direct imperative
- An overreliance on English forms questioning the addressee's ability to perform the request
- An overreliance on typical Russian syntactic structures related to extremely polite speech behavior (combinations comprised of negative, conditional, and interrogative particles)

In the present study, the only overlapping categories are an overreliance on interrogatives and more verbosity, also referred to as the waffle phenomenon. In concordance with the conclusions from other studies on interlanguage speech acts, this

study found that some of the nonnative requests were grandiloquent, a phenomenon that the raters commented on as ‘over-politeness.’ In particular, the raters noted that NNS messages tended to overuse conditionals in combination with other mitigation strategies (e.g., ‘I would be extremely grateful if...,’ ‘If you can do it, I will appreciate it...’).

Based on a careful examination of those areas where the two NNS differed from the NS, the following additional categories of pragmalinguistic failure are proposed:

- An overreliance on want statements and positive preparatory strategies
- Underrepresentation of explicit performatives and negative preparatory strategies
- An overuse of upgraders
- Nonnative like use of forms of address (i.e., the use of the title ‘professor’ and last names without patronymics)
- Nonnative like use of closings (i.e., the preference of ‘many thanks’ over ‘with respect’)
- Insufficient acknowledgement of the imposition (this was in accordance with Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig, 1996) and information about the background of the sender

Because several of these areas were pointed out by the raters as the features that stood out in the NNS emails, it can be assumed that they account, at least partially, for this group’s lower overall ratings of appropriateness and politeness.

Pragmatic transfer

Based on the comparison of Russian and English emails written by native speakers of English and on the follow up interviews with selected participants, it can be speculated that some of the linguistic features found in Russian messages may have resulted from pragmatic transfer. Recall that pragmatic transfer refers to the influence learners' knowledge of other languages exerts on how they understand and produce pragmatic information in their L2 (Kasper, 1992). In the case of the present study, pragmatic transfer would be demonstrated through the use of politeness strategies or email writing conventions typical in English that were used by the subjects in their Russian emails.

In the data collected for the present study, the most obvious case of pragmatic transfer is the use of the title 'professor' in the salutation. Whereas this form of address appears in NS speaker data only once, it was used by 75% of the participants in the control data. Another case of pragmatic transfer is the use of 'Many thanks,' 'Thank you for your time,' and 'Thank you for your help' in the closing of the message. All messages in the control set end in one of these expressions, and Americans writing emails in Russian used one of these closings in 67% of cases. In comparison, only the first one of these closings was used by Russian native speakers, and it is only found in 10% of their messages, their first closing choice being 'With respect.' The overreliance on salutations and closings found in the majority of English messages suggests that these are typical email writing conventions and politeness strategies in English, and their use in NNS emails is a result of negative pragmatic transfer.

As far as head acts are concerned, want statements and positive preparatory strategies may have also resulted from pragmatic transfer. Recall that want statements were used in 42% of NNS emails (compared with only 12% of NS messages), and preparatory positive strategies were used in 12% of NNS emails (compared with 2% of NS messages). However, only one message in the English control data contained a want statement, and none contained preparatory positive strategies, suggesting that these features did not result from pragmatic transfer. Previous research has found that want statements are used by less advanced learners or in situations when learners felt the request was urgent (Chen, 2006). As far as the positive preparatory strategy is concerned, the most frequently used positive preparatory phrase ('Could you') is a conventional request in English. While its use in Russian may have resulted from negative transfer, it is also possible that the positive preparatory strategy is a feature of the learners' interlanguage that resulted from incomplete acquisition negative preparatory strategy, a highly conventionalized request strategy in Russian.

Another area of noticeable difference that needs to be considered here is detailed preparators. As stated in Chapter 4, native speakers of Russian tended to provide more detailed information about themselves and the context of the request than did nonnative speakers. An examination of the English data suggests that this, too, is not a case of pragmatic transfer, as the majority of English messages contained a lot of details about the sender and the reason for the request. The follow-up interviews shed some light on this discrepancy as a few participants mentioned that they thought it would be appropriate to include more background information, but they were not able to recall the appropriate linguistic means to express their ideas. In other words, they did not include certain

information in their messages because they were not sure how to express them in Russian. Thus, it seems that this is an issue of grammatical, and not sociolinguistic competence (Swain & Canale, 1980).

On the other hand, the use of conditionals by NNS is quite likely a case of negative pragmatic transfer. 100% of the messages in the control data used conditional utterances such as ‘Would it be possible...’, ‘I was wondering if...’ and ‘Would you please let me know...’ and 11% of NNS messages contained similar requests. Similarly, the use of certain upgraders such as ‘I am free on Tuesdays and Thursdays,’ or ‘I am available on Monday after class,’ may have been caused by pragmatic transfer. While the NS and NNS group showed some similarities along this dimension, the informants who participated in the follow-up interview commented that they would be likely to provide their instructors with specific times when they are available to meet because their American professors had specifically asked for such information when negotiating meeting times in email exchanges. On the other hand, the Russian raters stated that it would be inappropriate to do so in Russian; rather, it is customary for Russian professors to state when they are available, and for students to appear when expected.

Overall, while it seems that some of the differences in NNS linguistic behavior can be ascribed to pragmatic transfer, other differences may result from the lack of appropriate linguistic means or from incompletely developed features of the learners’ interlanguage.

Politeness

Politeness is a complex system used by interlocutors to soften threats to face (Brown & Levinson, 1978) or a strategic way of avoiding conflict (Leech, 1983, p. 19). In the present study, the native speaker raters were asked to evaluate each message in terms of how polite or impolite it was. The discrepancy between native and nonnative messages on this measure was strong, and the strategy analysis revealed some striking differences that may have affected the raters' perceptions of politeness.

It is now an established fact in the field of pragmatics that politeness and directness do not constitute parallel dimensions. In other words, some cultures (nota bene Russian) show preference for direct politeness strategies, while others (such as American) prefer indirect politeness strategies. In the present study, there was a similarity in the use of direct and indirect strategies by the two groups, suggesting that nonnative speaker participants have correctly acquired this aspect of Russian pragmatics.

Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) distinguish between negative and positive politeness strategies. To save an interlocutor's positive face, i.e., a person's wish to be a part of a group and sharing involvement with others, one can express friendliness or approval, appeal to the hearer's need to be liked and treated as a member of the same group, demonstrate closeness and solidarity with the hearer, or make the hearer feel good or emphasizes common goals. To save an interlocutor's negative face, which involves detachment and a need for personal freedom, speakers can give options, apologize, stress the importance of one's values and recognize the status of the interlocutor.

Some patterns have emerged in the data collected in the present study. Overall, the majority of both NS and NNS messages contained negative politeness strategies, such

as conventional indirectness, using questions and downgraders to minimize the imposition, giving the option not to perform the act, being direct (i.e., doing the FTA on record), communicating the sender's want not to impinge on the recipient (e.g., 'I understand that you are busy'), and using pluralized pronouns ('we'). Native and nonnative messages did not display noticeable differences in the use of negative politeness with the exception of preparatory negative strategies.

As well, positive politeness strategies were also used by both groups. They include giving reasons for the request to convince the recipient that the request is reasonable and giving deference (i.e., acknowledging the superior position of the recipient to defuse the potential threat to face). Examples of where the two groups of participants differed are the use of forms of address (names and patronymics, 'respected' and 'professor'), capitalization of second person singular pronouns and using detailed preparators. However, the NNS participants converged with the NS participants in the use of other appeals to positive face such as the correct choice of the polite 'vy' (you) versus the familiar 'ty' (you), providing justifications for the request, and the use of disarmers and imposition minimizers.

In sum, while there were important similarities in the use of positive and negative politeness between the two groups, it is quite possible that the existing differences affected raters' perceptions of overall politeness of the messages.

Requests proper vs. email writing conventions

An important distinction must be drawn between the performance of the request proper (i.e., the head act), versus the appropriate use of email writing conventions. Those

informants who participated in the follow-up interviews acknowledged that they did not receive instruction in written Russian until they enrolled in college after returning from their LDS mission. In addition, the lack of knowledge of formal writing conventions in an L2 does not imply that the participants failed to acquire this particular aspect of sociolinguistic competence. Rather, it was absent from the type of input they were exposed to in the immersion context. For this reason, the inappropriate use of salutations, names, and closings by nonnative speakers in the present study should not be interpreted as their lack of sociolinguistic competence. Lack of familiarity with the Russian email writing conventions does not signify that they are unable to perform polite requests in their L2.

On the other hand, the differences observed in the performance of the head act of request can give us an insight into the learners' level of sociolinguistic competence. Strategies such as explicit performatives and preparatory negative statements are highly conventionalized ways to perform requests in Russian, and an extended stay in a Russian speaking community should have enhanced their acquisition. Thus, the use of head acts as well as modifications such as the use of names, or the use of upgraders and downgraders is not specific to the scenarios used in the present study, and is applicable to other kinds of exchanges, including spoken discourse. As can be concluded from the data analysis in Chapter 4, some of the NNS messages contained these strategies suggesting that the participants' sociolinguistic competence was developed to some extent. On the other hand, overreliance on head act strategies such as positive preparatory and want statements, which were uncommon in the NS data, suggests that it has not developed completely.

Cultural values

The difference between American and Russian cultural values can inform our understanding of the appropriateness and politeness differences found between the messages written by native and nonnative informants. In the follow-up interviews, the participants mentioned, for example, that the reason why they used the upgraders related to time (e.g., ‘I am free on Tuesday’) was because they felt this would save the addressee time. More specifically, they assumed that if they specified the time when they are available in their first message, it would reduce the number of exchanges between them and the professor.

Another American value mentioned in the follow-up interviews was directness and openness. The participants felt that perhaps NNS messages contained more want statements than did NS messages because Americans felt it was acceptable to be direct and open. While there might be some validity to this claim, previous research suggests that want statements may be preferred by less advanced learners (Chen 2006), and their use can be considered a less polite requestive strategy (Tanaka & Kawade, 1982); in fact, it may actually have a negative effect on the respondent (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996). Therefore, it is also possible that it was the NNS’s lack of grammatical competence that caused their preference for this strategy.

Finally, a few subjects mentioned the use of the first person inclusive pronoun ‘my’ (we) as a way to minimize the imposition by reducing the burden carried by the recipient. They thought it was appropriate to use ‘my’ with university professors because in the US the relationship between students and professors is not as formal as in the Russian culture. They felt that even though some American professors prefer to maintain

the distance between themselves and the students, it is not uncommon for the relationships to be rather informal and friendly. In relation to this issue, they also discussed individuality and how it affects interpersonal relations in the American culture. Namely, they felt that because everyone is considered unique and equal, the social distance between students and professors seems smaller than in Russia. This is consistent with the point made by the raters, namely that some of the NNS participants' messages used a familiar tone, which seemed inappropriate.

Overall, while the cultural values mentioned in the follow-up interviews clearly cannot account for all the observed differences between the two groups, they provide an interesting insight into what may affect linguistic choices second language learners make. Whereas in this study the follow-up interviews were not meant to be comprehensive, it is a line of research that should be continued in the future.

Extended stay in the target culture

Several studies in interlanguage pragmatics have focused on the impact of an extended stay in the target culture and the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence. The results of these studies suggest that study abroad can indeed increase students' ability to produce contextually appropriate discourse (e.g., Barron; Han, 2005; 2001; Owen, 2002; Schauer, 2004). The fact that the majority of the American participants in this study were former missionaries of the Church of the Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (LDS) must have had an impact on the collected data. In addition to spending two months at a Missionary Training Center (MTC) where they received about 5 hours of language

instruction per day, the participants lived between 1.5-2 years in a Russian speaking country, interacting in the Russian language on a daily basis.

Examining the effect of an extended stay in the target culture on the development of sociolinguistic competence was not a goal of the present study. Rather, it was a by-product due to the fact that the data collection process took place in Utah where the majority of students majoring in Russian are of the LDS faith. However, the fact that there was a considerable overlap of the head act and modification strategies used by the two groups suggests that the acquisition of the sociolinguistic competence is under way, which may have been accelerated due to the subjects' stay in the target culture.

The findings from the follow-up interviews suggest that the extensive training and stay in the target language culture may indeed have affected the acquisition of the sociolinguistic competence. For example, a few participants mentioned that during their training at the MTC a lot of attention was paid to being polite and showing respect in Russia. In fact, one of the participants specifically mentioned that his Russian teacher (who was a native speaker of Russian) spent extra time in class explaining polite forms of address and even mentioned the importance of capitalizing the pronouns when addressing people of a higher social status. As a result, this particular participant remained highly self-conscious during his stay in Ukraine. The other participants, too, mentioned that being polite in Russian was extremely important in their roles as missionaries. This finding from the follow up interviews confirms Schmidt's noticing hypothesis (1993). As far as pragmatics is concerned, Schmidt postulates that for acquisition to happen 'one must attend to both the linguistic forms of utterances and the relevant social and

contextual features with which they are associated' (p. 30), which is exactly what (at least some) participants in this study did.

In addition, prior studies (e.g., Norton, 2000; Peirce, 1995) suggest that the amount of effort learners invest in the learning may be affected by their personal values and the extent to which they want to approximate native speaker norms. The study participants must have believed in the importance of their roles as missionaries, and indeed, during the interview, they testified that spreading their faith was the major motivation to learn Russian. They also understood the importance of becoming proficient in Russian in order to communicate with the native speakers.

On the other hand, the participants mentioned that writing was not the focus of instruction until they started taking university level courses. They explained that in the MTC training, the focus was on spoken language, and some of them did not even learn how to read and write in Russian until later. While in the Russian speaking country, their experience with the written language was limited as well, and for many the first in-depth contact with the written language did not occur until they selected Russian as their major or minor in college. This can explain why they have not mastered certain writing conventions, such as using appropriate salutations and closings, and capitalizing pronouns. Together, these observations call attention to the very specific study population in this project, and future studies enrolling more traditional language learners are needed.

Limitations of the study

This section discusses the study's limitations, including the data elicitation method, the participant selection process, and the narrow focus on one speech act.

The justification for selection of the DCT as the data collection method was presented in Chapter 3. Its major advantages include the relative ease of obtaining homogenous data (in this case, electronic requests), and its common use in studies on speech acts. However, it is clear that the task is an artificial one. As a result, the data collected in this study may not exactly reflect the way email requests are typically written by both native and nonnative speakers of Russian. First, the informants were asked to imagine the person they were writing to, and the information provided about the addressees was very minimal. Writing to a real person is a much more complex task exactly because the writer knows so much more about the addressee. This knowledge could include not only the ethnic, cultural, and academic background of the recipient of the message, the status difference between the writer and the addressee, but also the actual relationship between the two parties, which could range from indifferent to friendly or perhaps hostile. Without a doubt, the nature of the relationship and the personal characteristics of the addressee affect the choice of linguistic moves in the message.

In addition, the participants were asked to write four quite similar emails during one data collection session. The serial production of similar requests could have influenced the message written by each participant in such a way that each message became more and more formulaic and repetitive. They may have also been shorter than real messages would be simply because the participants knew in advance how many total messages they would be writing, and they were not compensated for the participation in the study. Thus, they may have written the messages hurriedly, and without paying much attention to the strategies they were selecting simply because, in real life, they had

nothing to lose or gain. Or, on the other hand, they may have actually taken more care and time than they would have in real life because they knew these data were collected for a linguistic study. Overall, both the length of the messages, and the choice of the politeness strategies may have been affected by the artificiality of the task.

Another limitation of the study is the participant selection process. In particular, the American subject group is not representative of typical language learners in other parts of the country. The majority of the subjects were former LDS missionaries, who had received extensive training in Russian and spent a significant amount of time interacting in Russian in a target language community. This experience can be considered comparable to an extended study abroad, and as such makes the results generalizable to only those learners of Russian who had such an experience.

However, there are other factors that may not be apparent, but that should be given serious consideration as well. LDS missionaries have a very particular goal during their mission, namely, to convert others to their faith, which makes the nature of their communication with the target population very specific. For example, they are likely to pay special attention to politeness strategies. Therefore, they had to use more requests than other foreigners simply because they need to enter people's homes to spread the LDS faith, and because they may need the locals' help to navigate the community. In brief, the majority of the study population may have been more motivated to develop certain skills, which contribute to sociolinguistic competence, than a typical Russian learner.

Finally, this study focused on one speech act, the request, and only explored its formulation via electronic media. While the ability to perform requests falls in the

domain of sociolinguistic competence, it obviously does not fully represent it. In a similar fashion, the ability (or its lack) to follow email writing conventions conveys a very limited set of skills in an L2. Future studies need to explore other speech acts such as apologies, refusals, agreements, disagreements, invitations, etc., in languages other than English, in both written and spoken discourse.

Notwithstanding the limitations, this study does suggest that while acquiring the sociolinguistic knowledge and skills, which allows language users to construct appropriate and polite messages in their L2, takes a long time, certain approximations to native-speaker politeness and appropriateness do exist. Swain and Canale (1980) propose that conditions for appropriateness are more or less universal and that second language learners who have already acquired appropriateness conditions in their L1 should be able to apply them correctly in their L2 (p. 12). The findings of this study suggest that being appropriate, never mind polite, in an L2 is a much more complex issue. Nevertheless, it is possible that given sufficient time and instructional support, L2 learners can approximate native-speaker models.

Directions for future research

More research in the area of second language pragmatics, a relatively young branch of applied linguistics, is needed. The findings of the present study point to several directions for further research. First, more research along the lines of the present study, but enrolling more traditional foreign language learners who did not spend an extensive amount of time in the target culture, will yield answers to such questions as what aspects of sociolinguistic competence can be acquired as a result of classroom instruction.

Because the study population in this project was so unique, the results may be very different if DCT data are collected from a broader demographic base of college students majoring in Russian (or another foreign language) or studying it to satisfy their language requirement, rather than from LDS missionaries whose goal is to spread their gospel in the target community.

Moreover, more research comparing other speech acts, such as apologies, invitations, and congratulations is needed in Russian. To date, the majority of research has focused on oral communication, but clearly the ability to communicate in writing is a goal for many language learners. In order to address these needs in the classroom, identify specific problem areas must first be identified. In addition, while the use of electronic media and communication across borders are on the rise, studies on written communication should focus on electronic modes such as email, blogs, chat rooms, and social media such as Twitter and Facebook.

More broadly speaking, continued crosslinguistic work, incorporating yet unexplored languages is also needed. Speech act data from more languages would allow better understanding and appreciation of cross-cultural differences in what is socially and linguistically appropriate. Clearly, languages differ in the strategies they employ for the head acts and internal and external modifications, and findings from future studies would contribute to the body of pragmatic literature and potentially inform the field of second language acquisition.

Pedagogical implications

It is apparent from the results of this study and its predecessors (e.g., Mills, 2003; Ogiermann, 2009) that there is a need for explicit instruction to enhance learners' sociopragmatic competence. Hacking (2008) suggests a series of activities focusing on speech acts that can be used with second language learners. The first step entails creating a mini-corpus of native and nonnative examples of the target speech acts. The second step involves using these data in a series of activities ranging from speech act analysis to production. In one of the activities, the students become 'scientists' comparing native and nonnative choice of linguistic strategies, while in another the instructor guides the students drawing their attention to how target language speech acts differ from those in the students' first language. Hacking also advocates the development of metalinguistic awareness by introducing and exemplifying concepts such as 'pragmatic transfer,' as well as production practice through role-playing with and without scripts.

Certainly, these activities could enhance students' sociopragmatic competence. There are, however, two potential challenge areas for language instructors: understanding the importance of explicit instruction of L2 pragmatics, and creating instructional materials needed for the activities. While it is apparent that second language learners need more explicit instruction that would help them make their requests (and other speech acts) more socially appropriate and polite, that such instruction cannot take place until language teachers and instructors are not only aware of that gap, but also prepared to teach the pragmatics of the target language.

It is not the purpose of this study to examine existing preservice teacher programs in second language acquisition. However, a brief review of such programs suggests that

the issues of interlanguage pragmatics are treated very superficially, if at all. For example, in two ESL endorsement programs for public school teachers in Utah, the course work focuses on English phonetics and syntax, types of ESL and bilingual education, educational policy, literacy strategies, ESL/bilingual assessment, and building partnerships with ESL/bilingual families. Similarly, graduate programs for prospective foreign language teachers typically consist of an overview course in second language pedagogy, and courses in pedagogical structure of the language, language teaching strategies and assessment, curriculum design and development.

The existing literature on the subject specifically targeting foreign and second language instructors is not very extensive, either. An examination of the newest Cambridge University Press publications in ESL and Applied Linguistics revealed one title directly related to pragmatics issues (i.e., *Pragmatics in Language Teaching*) in contrast to six titles explicitly mentioning vocabulary. Similarly, one title specifically meant for language instructors was found on the Routledge website (i.e., *Pragmatics for Language Educators*). This brief search only focused on the key words in titles, as a complete review of materials in pragmatics falls out of the scope of this study. Such a review is critically needed as it would help identify the available sources for teachers as well as existing gaps. Overall, it may be a premature judgment, but it seems that little attention is given to raising the in-service and pre-service teachers' awareness of the importance of teaching sociopragmatic skills in the target language. In order for it to become a common practice in second and foreign language classrooms, we first need more focus on interlanguage pragmatics in teacher education programs.

The next step in making teaching of sociopragmatic skills happen in the classroom is to create well-designed, easy to use pedagogical materials. It is no secret that second and foreign language teachers spend much of their time creating or redesigning activities for their students. However, until explicit attention to the sociolinguistic component of communicative competence becomes a common classroom practice, access to ready-to-use activities and worksheets would lessen the burden these teachers carry and promote focus on interlanguage pragmatics in second and foreign language lessons. The body of research on crosscultural differences in realization of speech acts is extremely rich. The next step is to put these findings to a practical end.

Conclusion

Interlanguage pragmatics is a relatively young branch of applied linguistics, yet one that contributes to the understanding of the crosscultural variations in realization of speech acts as well as provides insights into the level of communicative competence in nonnative speakers. To contribute to the study of interlanguage pragmatics, the present study has identified and explored gaps in the field by examining electronic requests written by native speakers and learners of Russian, thereby broadening the understanding of communicative competence of second language speakers of languages other than English.

The results suggest that while NNS messages received lower scores for clarity, appropriateness, and politeness relative to the scores of NS messages, and while differences exist in the choice of requestive strategies, there are some similarities between the two group. Some of the existing differences may have been the result of the

underdeveloped sociolinguistic competence; however, some other differences most likely resulted from the lack of instruction on Russian writing conventions. The similarities, on the other hand, suggest that the participants' interlanguage, including their sociolinguistic competence, is approximating that of the native speakers. Because of the limited scope of this study, and because of the limitations addressed above, further research in this field is needed.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR AMERICAN LEARNERS OF RUSSIAN

Participant ID

Please take your time answering the following questions, and be as honest as possible. Your answers will not be correlated with your name. Your email address will be removed from the questionnaire by the researcher who will assign your responses a random number.

Please provide the email address from which will send your responses. Write your email address on the line below.

1. Gender: (circle one) Female Male
2. Age: (circle one) 18-25 26-35 36-45 45+
3. What language do you speak with your parents?

4. What language do you consider to be your native language?

5. What languages other than Russian have your studied?

Language	Circle your level of proficiency		
	basic	intermediate	advanced
	basic	intermediate	advanced
	basic	intermediate	advanced
	basic	intermediate	advanced

6. Describe any formal Russian language training you have had (for example, classes, MTC, tutoring, etc.). Be specific about the length of time and hours per day.

7. Circle the statement that best reflects how you feel about your ability to communicate with native speakers of Russian:
 - a. I feel very comfortable in all environments/ situations.
 - b. I feel comfortable in most environments/ situations.
 - c. I never really feel very comfortable.
 - d. I am often uncomfortable.
8. Did you spend any time in Russia or another Russian speaking country?
YES NO
9. If you answered yes to question #8, answer questions a-c below:
 - a. How much time did you spend there?
 - b. What was the reason for your stay there?
 - c. With whom did you live (Americans/ Russians/ other)?
 - d. In what language did you primarily communicate while there?
 - e. Circle the number of hours per day (on average) that you spent interacting in Russian with native Russian speakers.
1-2 3-4 5-6 7-8 9+

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NATIVE SPEAKERS OF RUSSIAN

Опрос участника исследования

ИД участника _____

Пожалуйста, ничего не

Ответьте, пожалуйста, на эти вопросы, настолько честно, насколько это возможно. Ваши ответы не будут ассоциироваться с Вашим именем. Ваш электронный адрес не будет указан в опросе.

Пожалуйста, укажите ваш электронный адрес здесь: _____

1. Пол: (обведите один вариант) Женский Мужской
2. Возраст (обведите один вариант) 18-25 26-35 36-45 45+
3. На каком языке Вы говорите со своими родителями?
4. Какой язык Вы считаете своим родным?
5. Какие языки Вы еще знаете и как хорошо им(и) владеете?

Язык	Уровень		
	начальный уровень	только разговорный	владею свободно
	начальный уровень	только разговорный	владею свободно
	начальный уровень	только разговорный	владею свободно
	начальный уровень	только разговорный	владею свободно

6. Как долго, где и когда Вы изучали английский язык (например, в школе, в университете, частным образом)? Укажите продолжительность занятий, сколько часов в день Вы занимались.
7. Обведите утверждение, наилучшим образом описывающее Ваши возможности общения с людьми, для которых английский язык является родным:
 - a. Я чувствую себя очень уверенно в любой обстановке, при любых ситуациях.
 - b. Я чувствую себя уверенно в большинстве случаев в различных ситуациях.
 - c. Я никогда не чувствую себя очень уверенно.
 - d. Я часто чувствую себя неуверенно.

8. Вы когда-нибудь бывали в стране, где говорят на английском языке?
ДА НЕТ
9. Если вы ответили ДА на вопрос № 8, ответьте, пожалуйста, на следующие вопросы:
- a. Сколько времени Вы провели в стране?
 - b. Цель Вашего пребывания в стране?
 - c. С кем Вы жили (в американской семье / с русскими / с кем-то другим)
 - d. На каком языке Вы обычно говорили во время Вашего пребывания в стране?
 - e. Обведите в кружок среднее количество часов в день, которое Вы проводили, разговаривая на английском языке с носителями английского языка:
1-2 3-4 5-6 7-8 9+

APPENDIX C

ENGLISH QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RUSSIANS

Participant ID

Please take your time answering the following questions, and be as honest as possible. Your answers will not be correlated with your name. Your email address will be removed from the questionnaire by the researcher who will assign your responses a random number.

Please provide the email address from which will send your responses. Write your email address on the line below.

1. Gender: (circle one) Female Male

2. Age: (circle one) 18-25 26-35 36-45 45+

3. What language do you speak with your parents?

4. What language do you consider to be your native language?

5. What foreign languages have you studied?

Language	Circle your level of proficiency		
	basic	intermediate	advanced
	basic	intermediate	advanced
	basic	intermediate	advanced
	basic	intermediate	advanced

6. Describe any formal English language training you have had (for example, classes, tutoring, etc.). Be specific about the length of time and hours per day.
7. Circle the statement that best reflects how you feel about your ability to communicate with native speakers of English:
 - a. I feel very comfortable in all environments/ situations.
 - b. I feel comfortable in most environments/ situations.
 - c. I never really feel very comfortable.
 - d. I am often uncomfortable.
8. Did you spend any time in an English speaking country? YES NO
9. If you answered yes to question #8, answer questions a-c below:
 - a. How much time did you spend there?
 - b. What was the reason for your stay there?
 - c. With whom did you live (Americans/ Russians/ other)?
 - d. In what language did you primarily communicate while there?
 - e. Circle the number of hours per day (on average) that you spent interacting in English with native English speakers.
1-2 3-4 5-6 7-8 9+

APPENDIX D

DISCOURSE COMPLETION TASK

Ситуация №1: Напишите электронное письмо профессору Гавриловой Людмиле Петровне в Университет Санкт-Петербурга, самого древнего университета в России, с просьбой предоставить вам информацию об учебной программе по русской литературе, а также узнать каковы ваши шансы быть принятым в университет.

Ситуация №2: Вы завершили учебную программу по истории в Московском государственном университете. Напишите электронное письмо профессору Андрею Сергеевичу Дворниченко, который преподавал вам историю, в котором вы попросите его написать вам рекомендательное письмо для получения стипендии.

Ситуация №3: Вы обучаетесь в Новосибирском государственном университете, одном из лучших университетов России. Напишите электронное письмо профессору Илье Алексеевичу Грекову, который преподает вам усиленный курс русской литературы, с просьбой назначить собеседование чтобы обсудить некоторые вопросы о курсе.

Ситуация №4: Вы – студент Томского государственного университета, изучаете русскую литературу. Напишите электронное письмо профессору Олегу Александровичу Королеву, преподавателю русской литературы, с просьбой назначить собеседование по поводу вашей семестровой работы.

DISCOURSE COMPLETION TASK – ENGLISH VERSION

Instructions: Carefully read the four scenarios below. To respond to each scenario, create an email message in Russian. Send your message to yourprof2012@yahoo.com. Please use the same email that you provided in the questionnaire.

Situation 1

Write an email to Professor Ludmila Petrovna Gavrilova at St. Petersburg University, the oldest university in Russia, in which you request information about the graduate program in Russian Literature and ask for her opinion of what your chances are to be accepted.

Situation 2

You completed your undergraduate degree in history at Moscow State University. Write an email to Professor Andrey Sergeevich Dvornichenkoin, with whom you took a Russian history class, in which you ask him to write you a letter of recommendation for a scholarship.

Situation 3

You are studying at Novosibirsk State University, one of the top universities in Russia. Write an email to Professor Ilya Alekseevich Grekov, with whom you are taking an advanced Russian literature class, in which you request an appointment to discuss some questions you have about the class.

Situation 4

You are a student at Tomsk State University, and you are taking a Russian literature class. Write an email to Professor Oleg Aleksandrovich Korolev, who is teaching the class, and request an appointment to discuss your final paper.

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CONTROL GROUP

Please take your time answering the following questions, and be as honest as possible. Your answers will not be correlated with your name. Your email address will be removed from the questionnaire by the researcher who will assign your responses a random number.

Please provide the email address from which will send your responses. Write your name and email address on the line below.

1. Gender: (circle one) Female Male
2. Age: (circle one) 18-25 26-35 36-45 45+
3. What language do you speak with your parents?

4. What language do you consider to be your native language?

5. What foreign languages have your studied?

Language	Circle your level of proficiency		
	basic	intermediate	advanced
	basic	intermediate	advanced
	basic	intermediate	advanced
	basic	intermediate	advanced

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did you open your email by saying 'xxxxx'?
2. Why did you address the recipient as 'xxxxx'?
3. Why did you use 'ТЫ' / 'ВЫ' when addressing the recipient?
4. Why did you use the verb 'xxxxx' in your message?
5. Why did you use the expression 'xxxxx' in your message?
6. What other expressions do you think you could have used in this message?
7. Why did you close your message with 'xxxxx'?
8. Do you think your message is polite?
9. Do you think your message is respectful?
10. Do you think your message is written in a way that a native speaker of Russian would write it?
11. What was the most difficult about writing this message?

APPENDIX G

INSTRUCTIONS FOR RATERS

Please read each prompt situation and the participant's response and answer the following questions. Check the number that corresponds best with your assessment of the person's performance.

Participant ID # _____ Situation # _____

1. Did the respondent make a comprehensible response?

1	2	3	4	5
response made				response was
no sense				entirely intelligible

2. Was the response socially appropriate?

1	2	3	4	5
response was				response was
entirely inappropriate				entirely appropriate

3. Was the response polite?

1	2	3	4	5
response was				response was
polite				impolite

INSTRUCTIONS FOR RATERS: RUSSIAN VERSION

Здравствуйте,

Благодарим Вас за участие в этом исследовании. Мы очень ценим Вашу помощь. Мы надеемся, что это не займет Вам много времени.

Пожалуйста ознакомьтесь внимательно с инструкциями. Вам нужно прочитать электронные письма и оценить ответы на каждый вопрос на шкале от 1 до 5. Для каждой ситуации представьте, что Вы – профессор, которому пришлют е-майли студенты.

Еще раз благодарим Вас за участие в этом исследовании.

С уважением,

Анна Крулац, главный исследователь

Ситуация №1: Вы - профессор Гаврилова Людмила Петровна в Университете Санкт-Петербурга. Вам пишет электронное письмо студент/студентка с просьбой предоставить ему/ей информацию об учебной программе по русской литературе, а также узнать каковы его/ей шансы быть принятым в университет.

Ситуация №2: Вы - профессор Андрей Сергеевич Дворниченко. Вам пишет студент/студентка, которому Вы преподавали историю. Он/она Вас просит написать ему/ей рекомендательное письмо для получения стипендии

Ситуация №3: Вы - профессор Илья Алексеевич Греков и преподаете усиленный курс русской литературы в Новосибирском государственном университете. Вам пишет электронное письмо студент/студентка с просьбой назначить собеседование, чтобы обсудить некоторые вопросы о курсе.

Ситуация №4: Вы – профессор Олег Александрович Королев и преподаете курс русской литературы в Томском государственном университете. Вам пишет электронное письмо студент/студентка с просьбой назначить собеседование по поводу его/ей семестровой работы.

1. Есть ли это электронное письмо (не)понятное?
- | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---------------------|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| совсем непонятное | | | совершенно понятное | |
2. Есть ли это электронное письмо социально (не)приемлемое?
- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|----------------------|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| совсем социально неприемлемое | | | социально приемлемое | |
3. Каким является студент написавший это письмо?
- | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|----------------|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| совсем невежливым | | | очень вежливым | |

APPENDIX H

ENGLISH CONTROL DATA ELICITATION INSTRUMENT

Situation 1

Write an email to Professor Julia Brown at the University of California, in which you request information about the graduate program in Linguistics and ask for her opinion of what your chances are to be accepted.

Situation 2

You are working on your undergraduate degree in history at the University of Utah. Write an email to Professor Robert Smith, with whom you took a work history class, in which you ask him to write you a letter of recommendation for a scholarship.

Situation 3

You are studying at University of Utah. Write an email to Professor Stephen Brown, with whom you are taking an advanced writing class, in which you request an appointment to discuss some questions you have about the class.

Situation 4

You are a student at the University of Utah, and you are taking a psychology class. Write an email to Professor Mary Smith, who is teaching the class, and request an appointment to discuss your final paper.

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